

Universities as Agents of the State: The Example of Widening Participation

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Abstract

The research project investigates the role Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play in delivering the government's social policies through Widening Participation (WP) policy, why HEIs have a role in social policy and whether the current model fits all segments of the HE sector. In particular, it evaluates the impact of the policies on the development of HEIs and particularly post-92 HEI expansion.

It is recognised that the political and economic environment has had, and will continue to have, a significant level of influence on the development of Higher Education (HE) within England. The relationship between the state and HE in delivering WP raises questions of autonomy and purpose which are explored within the study, recognising the importance of understanding the original intentions of the policy. The study ultimately helps to identify the future role of HEIs in delivering state policies, using WP policy as the example, and how this will impact on HEIs.

A mixed methods approach, combining documentary analysis and comparative analysis with futures studies, is used to conduct the study. Case studies have been used to support the comparative analysis. The use of future studies with WP and HE, pioneered within this study, offering insight into a new method of considering the role of institutions in delivering social policies. The alternate futures produced aid our understanding of what a mutually beneficial policy outcome would be for both institutions and the state. This offers a preferred model of effective state-HE relationships allowing institutions to have a greater level of autonomy from the state whilst sharing the strategic aims of the state in delivering growth through WP.

The model supports HEI policy makers in planning for change within the sector. The study, and the model produced, is designed to suggest further research for conducting a stakeholder analysis. This would test the future scenarios produced in the study with key influencers within the HE sector. The outcome of this would be to facilitate the planning process for the future in an

evidence-based way. The model has the potential to be reused for other policy initiatives, other than the example of WP, to shape future state-HE relationships.

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1. Context and discussion of terms

This study is a critical analysis of policy and practice in relation to the area of research I have chosen to explore:

‘Universities as an agent of the state: An analysis of the role of Higher Education Institutions in delivering the government’s social policies, using widening participation as an example.’

My experience within the national policy environment has helped to form the research question¹. I have advised a number of organisations on Higher Education (HE) and Widening Participation (WP) policy, including the University Alliance, the British Council, Kingston University, The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust and the Department for Education. I have also been a participant in a 12-month project with Action on Access to help develop national HEI WP policies. This project looked at whether national policy can be tailored to meet the needs of an HEI whilst still fulfilling the requirements set out by Government. In the past two years I have been appointed Vice-Chair of the international HE network, the Forum for Access and Continuing Education, and provided on-going advice on HE policy for a policy forum led by members of the House of Lords. This work, and my previous practitioner experience, has led me to question the roles of universities and the state in relation to WP. I have seen at first-hand how difficult it has been for the HE sector to provide effective evaluation of its role in delivering the government’s social policies.

Through my policy work in this field it is my understanding that WP policies in the UK were devised to redress the low participation in HE of the lower income social groups, which is supported by the formal definitions later in this study. The Government-funded Higher Education Funding Council for

¹ This section is the only element of the study to be written in the ‘first person’, with the purpose of explaining the how the research question was derived.

England (HEFCE) makes the link between under-representation, equity and social inclusion. We will see within this work that WP is a contested concept, but I use the UK National Audit Office's definition: 'Reducing the differences in participation rates between different groups in the higher education population by encouraging applications from, and increasing the participation of, individuals from groups that are under-represented in higher education in relation to the general population'(NAO, 2008, p60). The previous government set a target of 50% of under 30s to participate in HE and benchmarks, or targets, have been set for institutions for their recruitment of students from non-traditional backgrounds. For many former polytechnics such as the University of Hertfordshire the benchmarks, although contextualised, are easily met due to the demographic of the student body, particularly in Hertfordshire's case, its close proximity to North London. However, institutions that are older, such as those within the Russell Group, struggle to fulfil the benchmark targets².

Institutions and projects such as Aimhigher³ have had extensive funding, despite this there has only been limited success, reflecting the wider social policy context in which social mobility generally has not changed from its position in 1970 (LSE, 2007). Working within the sector I find this deeply concerning, especially since I can see the huge effort made by those working in WP to 'motivate' those from non-traditional backgrounds to enter HE. From a political perspective, the meaning of WP in the UK has changed from an adult-focused entity (Osborne, 2003) to a high-profile programme directed mainly at the young (HEFCE, 2007). In addition, the view is that WP is a product of massification of HE (Trow, 1973), which is further explored later in this study.

² Examples of the participation rates for different HEIs can be found with the institutional profiles section of this study.

³ Aimhigher was a project established in 2004 by the former Department for Education and Skills. It led a series of initiatives to widen participation to English HE.

Through professional practice I have also found there to be differing views on the aims of the social policies. To understand the government's intended meaning, I have to look back to the origins of the policy, a task rarely done by practitioners either through the preoccupations of delivery or the misplaced confidence in the thought that the policy has been well conceived and developed. Much of the recent social policy can be traced to the formation of the 'New' Labour party. It set out its stall early on its intentions for an expanded HE system (massification) both in the submissions to the Dearing Committee (Dearing, 1997) as well as stating in the 1997 election manifesto that the cost of an expanded system should partly be funded by graduates on an income basis, citing the success of such policies abroad (Labour Party, 1997).

In 1999 the Labour Party announced at their conference a 50% target for participation in HE. This target at times has been dismissed as being a sound bite informed not from research but to fit the tone of the speech (BBC, 2004). Through research for this study, and discussions with institutions within Europe, I have found that this is now the goal for many of the European countries. The adoption by other countries suggests that the target has more substance than just political rhetoric.

It is evident that the relatively new Labour government of the late 1990s was heavily influenced by recommendations of the Dearing Committee (Dearing, 1997) established by the previous Conservative administration, and continued the principles of differentiation within the sector. However, there was a policy shift in 2000, when the then Education Minister, David Blunkett, announced far-reaching reforms. He made particularly clear the support for wider participation and social inclusion.

It is also important to recognise that the 'third way' concept of social justice, derived from the work of Anthony Giddens, heavily influenced the then Prime Minister, Rt Hon Tony Blair, and Chancellor, Rt Hon Gordon Brown. Their stated aim was to end the barriers of social class through social justice and

create opportunities through the concept of choice and meeting the needs of globalisation (Giddens, 1998).

As a former student leader I find it difficult to agree with critics of the social policies, such as Rt Hon. the Lord Patten (Chancellor of Oxford University) and prominent Conservative peer) who accused the government of 'infringing on the independence of universities and treating them like "local social security offices" in the drive to improve the nation's education and social mobility' (Curtis, 2008). For me, the idea of a meritocracy seems to fit with the values of a modern democracy, with those with the ability being able to benefit regardless of their background. We cannot, however, ignore the arguments and evidence that indicate the current system is failing to deliver on its own goals.

The HE sector is often segmented either by itself in forming mission groups or by the public/media to fit a selected narrative. I propose there are three main segments of the sector (elite, middle and highly dependant), each facing different challenges with regards to relations with the state. In each case, there is an as yet unaddressed tension between institutional autonomy and Government policy objectives around social mobility through HE participation.

A large number of institutions, such as the University of Hertfordshire, are sandwiched between the elite and those highly dependent on Government support. These 'middle' institutions are under increasing pressure to differentiate themselves, and find their market position in a context of declining public funding and potentially a more open fees system. My research in many ways will benefit this group most; this group in particular will find it difficult to manage their role with the state, balancing conflicting demands many of which could challenge the concept or idea of a University.

I recognise that HE is constantly evolving regardless of political intervention. However, a speech by the former Secretary of State responsible for Universities, Lord Mandelson, endorsed the autonomy of institutions. He did this whilst implying that this is a managerial autonomy, which must be

balanced with contributing towards a collective, national strategic vision (Mandelson, 2009). These issues of autonomy are explored throughout this thesis to aid our understanding of to what extent autonomy exists if universities are acting as 'agents of the state' in delivering social policies such as WP. This idea of 'collective' promoted by Mandelson is critiqued within a conference paper I co-authored (Green et al., 2011). This paper recognises that the concept of the collective masks real difficulties. We state that 'collective' implies consensual and coherent, and it must be questioned whether collectivity can be achieved between the state and what is an increasingly diverse sector. My own institution is itself striving to differentiate itself in a crowded market and may never fare well under a national strategy. Secondly, and more importantly for this thesis, I ask how far can a collectivity of purpose between the state and universities actually deliver enhanced social justice when the problem is pervasive in all policy areas?

Intended outcomes

The chosen area of research is an analysis of the role of Higher Education Institutions in delivering the government's social policies. The study uses widening participation as the central example to support the analysis including the use of the futures methodology. The study has been focused in the context of the subsequent sub-questions following a literature review and baseline study:

1. To what extent is it the role of universities to engage in the delivery of social policies?
2. What impact has the political environment had on WP and HEIs?
3. Is there evidence that WP policies of the government have delivered the desired results or progressed towards them?
4. What is the future relationship between State and HEI in delivering WP, Could/would WP exist in a private HE sector?

These questions are shared concerns within the sector and will aid the understanding of policy and practice in the future. The answers to these questions will form the basis of the intended outcomes of this study.

Rationale

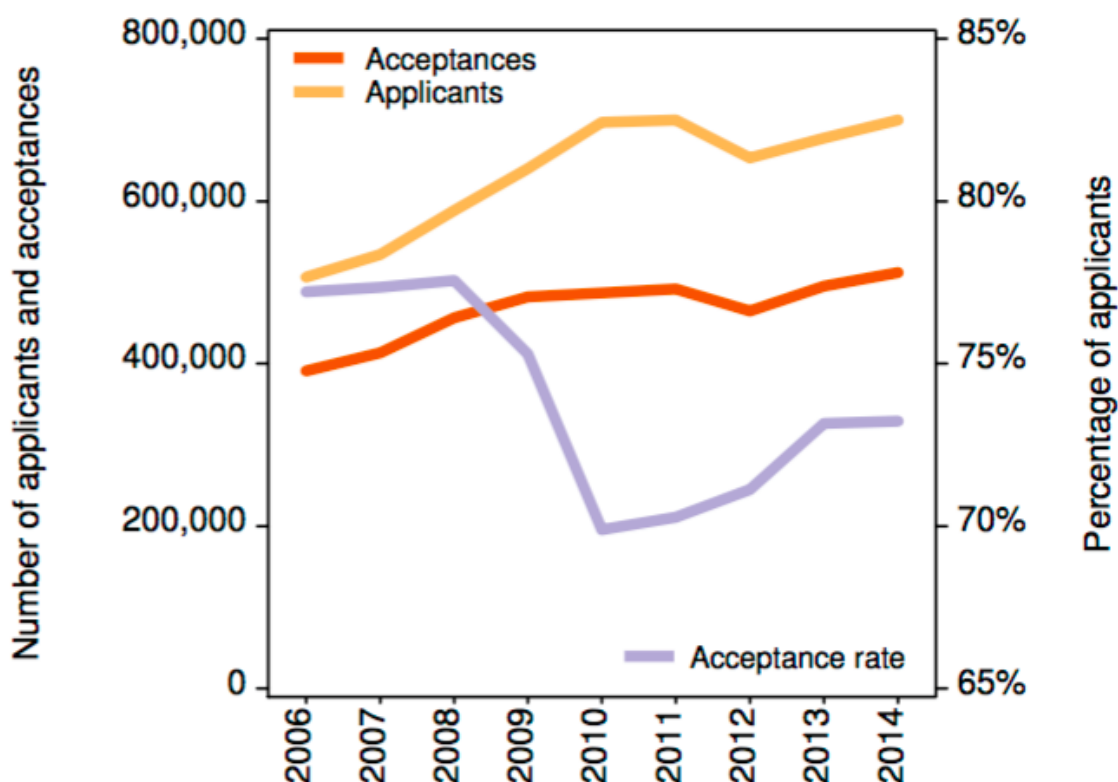
The issues raised in the research question are particularly relevant for the HE sector in the UK. Following a General Election held in May 2015, the capped fee level is widely accepted as being unsustainable and the HE participation rate is lower than expected. This is five years after the deadline for achieving the Labour manifesto target of 50% participation in HE by 2010 (Labour, 2001). The main parties in England (the Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats) did not make definitive policy announcements on WP, they did however indicate that it must remain a political priority to widen university access by non-traditional groups.

My research helps to establish the current role HEIs play in delivering the government's social policies through WP policy, why HEIs could be seen to have a role in 'social engineering' and whether the current model fits all segments of the HE sector. I explore the impact of the policies on the development of HEIs and particularly post-92 HEI expansion. I also look at how this policy could further differentiate between HEIs and impact on their future success. The project also has the potential to help understand the future direction of national WP policy and how that will impact on HEIs. It adds to the body of evidence that will assist key HEI policy makers in planning for change in the evolving state-HE relationship including any potential funding decreases. This study contributes to the discussion on the impact of the state-university relationships, and in particular on how Government influence may have altered the "idea" of a university. It is my view, on the basis of this research, that the interventionist policies devised to increase social mobility offer timely examples of the current UK Government's desire to shape the sector to fulfil its own political aims.

This has been done primarily through a well-resourced WP sector within UK HE. The figures are substantial compared to countries such as Sweden who spent £3m in their initiative similar to Aimhigher, compared with £239.5m that was allocated to the Aimhigher programme for 2008-2011 and a further £352m directly to institutions for WP in 2008-09 (HEFCE, 2009). This level of funding raises questions about the value-for-money these initiatives offer especially when there is a static trend in teaching funding, in a context of a cap on fees at £9,000.

It is worth noting that the demand for places at UK HEIs had been increasing, see Graph 1 below, UCAS Applicants, acceptances and acceptance rate. Can these increases be seen as an indication of the success of the government's social and economic policy?. The evidence is not conclusive. It could quite easily be assumed that the economic conditions and more effective and directed recruitment activity have contributed greatly to the increase. Low participation groups⁴ are not being engaged as much as first hoped by the policy makers, and furthermore, the argument around the disintegration of identity and "idea" of HE is becoming more compelling. Success may not bring all of the results politicians hope for, as Fisher indicates 'the price is that this success may not actually be what current societal needs require in terms of future expectations' (Fisher, 2006, p11).

⁴ Low participation groups are normally considered those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, however can include specific groups of students such as mature students, some black or minority ethnic (BME) students and care leavers.



Graph 1: Applicants, acceptances and acceptance rates. Note: the graph is from UCAS end of cycle report, December 2014 (UCAS, 2014)

Impact on participants, institutions and significant stakeholders

The participants in this research are mostly WP practitioners, many of whom work to deliver on WP policies through outreach activities and often struggle with the constant alterations to policy and funding. They are expected to deliver long-term policy goals with short-term funding and to lead on interventions which are not embedded into institutions' practice or strategic plans. My knowledge of managing these areas within a large institution will help inform this project, offering some further knowledge and direction to those working to widen participation and help through policy recommendations giving them clarity of purpose.

Higher Education Institutions have a difficult role in managing the expectations and needs of governors, students, staff and government. The relationship with the government can be seen as one of the most complex,

with influence being indirectly exercised by government through “Quangos” (quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation) bodies such as HEFCE, Aimhigher, Action on Access, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). The financial power that the Government wields over HEIs’ funding dominates their activity (Henkel and Little 1998), this remains the case despite a move towards direct funding from the students with almost £4 billion of the total £12.1 billion available to universities still coming directly from HEFCE (2015). The outcomes of the research will provide institutions with the opportunity to define their role in the context of these policy initiatives helping them to prioritise and add value where possible.

The main stakeholders in this study are not just the state and universities, students themselves are central to the intended outcomes of the policies. The rate at which working class young people entered HE during the periods of significant intervention, the four years proceeding 2009, increased by little more than 2% (Public Accounts Committee, 2009). Increased pressure to progress into HE combined with a limitation in student numbers has provided mixed messages and the evidence is clear that although record numbers of young people are wishing to go to university, the gap between social groups accessing HE has only been slightly reduced.

The practitioner

Increasingly, practitioners in the field of WP have repositioned their professional identity and role, due in part to the changes within the sector, from a primarily operational focus into a strategic leadership position. These ‘leader practitioners’ have also been contributing more to both national and institutional policy. This manifests in a range of ways including their contribution as expert advisors to national organisations such as HEFCE, helping to steer policy based on their experiences. There is a potential that the ‘insider’ policy development role has an inherent bias to maintain the status-quo or at least to protect their own area of work.

This potential for partiality should not necessary detract from the recognition that there is a drive to understand how and why policy is developed and what, if any, alternative there could be. There are further risks in this approach for good policy making, as their input allows the state to claim that it is sector-lead policy, even when the role of the practitioners was only to refine or help influence the process of implementation, for example the national strategy for access and student success.⁵ What consultation have these practitioners had with their peers? What framework have they used to arrive at their policy position? The futures methodology outlined later in this study will help practitioners answer these questions and may provide a framework for them to consult peers on future policy developments.

Discussion of Terms

Higher Education (HE), like many sectors, has its own language; this is particularly evident when discussing widening participation, where terms are sometimes contested and at times have been used interchangeably. This can unfortunately make the subject inaccessible and confusing to those outside, and often within, the sector. For the purpose of this thesis it is important to clearly outline the distinction between the terms and their importance within the HE policy context.

Widening Participation (WP) policies in the England and Wales were devised to redress the low participation in Higher Education (HE) of the lower income social groups. The Government-funded Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) makes the link between under-representation in Higher Education to equity and social inclusion.

The term widening participation is often used to describe the many aspects of participation in HE, from fair access to the wider concept of social mobility.

⁵ The National strategy for access and student success is a document produced jointly between OFFA, HEFCE and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. The document was produced at the request of government ministers to have shared strategy for this area of policy. 249 practitioners provided input to the creation of the strategy.

Institutions and organisations have themselves sought to define the term for their own purposes, however, it is important to note the definition HEFCE gives:

"Widening participation addresses the large discrepancies in the take-up of higher education opportunities between different social groups." (HEFCE, 2006)

This definition is, on the whole, accepted within the sector and has changed little in the past twenty years. Any variation centres on the target social groups and the types of institutions requiring improved access. A key perception is that the students have the ability to study at the required standard but may have barriers to accessing HE, such as parental education or low aspirations. A significant volume of the WP initiatives sought to raise the aspirations of young learners from areas of low progression to HE, often some of the poorest areas in the UK.

The term 'fair access' refers mostly to the admissions process and the perceived lack of fairness in accessing certain 'elite' universities⁶. This is often measured not only by the background of the applicants, but also by the social mix of students studying at these selective institutions.

Fair access and widening participation can be delivered independently from each other, and on occasion undermine each other. It is also worth noting that the differences are often not recognised in wider debates, which can lead to mixed messages and policies with unintended consequences such as the National Scholarship Programme (NSP).⁷ Evidence does show that the most

⁶ Examples of the self-designated 'elite' institutions can be found within the institutional profiles, Oxford University and Lancaster University.

⁷ The NSP was announced alongside the rise in tuition fees in 2010. The original aim of the NSP was to encourage students from disadvantaged backgrounds access HE. The policy was introduced late in the application cycle and a significant proportion of recipients were unaware they were eligible. The impact on access was limited, however the majority of initiation did believe it had aided their WP activity (Bowes, 2013).

privileged in society are over-represented in the most 'elite' of institutions (Gregg et al., 2013). This may be caused by a combination of factors, including higher attainment levels at school and lack of aspiration from state pupil to apply to the selective institutions. Fair access is often the most politically charged element of WP, with suggestions of bias and elitism.

Social justice is often cited as a reason why WP is important. The reason being that regardless of social background, the positive impact a higher education has upon the individual and wider society is significant; including better pay, enjoyment of leisure, health and social cohesion (Barr et al., 2005, Gregg et al., 2013). The term social justice used in the context of HE can mean students from all backgrounds have equal access/opportunity to an education. One of the earliest references to social justice appeared in the book *'An Inquiry Into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth Most Conducive'*, stating "The first principle of social justice, that 'the sole object of all institutions and laws ought to be to promote the happiness of the whole of the community, or, where there was any incompatibility, that the happiness of the greater number should be always preferred to that of the lesser'" (Thompson, 1824, p218). The term 'happiness' is not one often used within the discourse around HE, however, the general meaning does have relevance within the sector with terms such as public good and student satisfaction having more currency. Perhaps far more relevant to the current policy context is the more recent thinking by the philosopher John Rawls, stating that equality and fairness are the most important elements of social justice (Rawls, 1999), he outlines that there should be equal access to opportunities by the least advantaged.

Social mobility as a term is directly linked to the arguments for fair access; it is dominant within the political rhetoric. It refers to the positive progress made between generations, ensuring that opportunities available to an individual are not limited by background. Examples can be as straightforward as an individual being relatively wealthier than their parents, greater access to

education or improved housing. Its relevance in HE, is through the notion that a higher education will increase a person's social status based on merit. UK Government policy seeks to ensure everyone, regardless of background, has the opportunity to progress. They have decided to monitor this progress using social mobility indicators (DPM, 2013), these include a number of HE and background indicators. The influence of parental background is well documented, including in the work by Archer on social class, with evidence demonstrating that the 'middle-class' deem it to be a natural progression from school and benefit from the positive impact of having a history of HE participation within the family. In contrast, the 'working class' parents who have not been to university lack the knowledge to advise their children on the opportunities available (Archer et al., 2005).

Massification or increased participation relates more generally to the expansion of HE, however, it is directly linked to the WP agenda. The term has significant relevance in relation to social justice as the impact of a mass system is felt the most by those who were previously outside the system, for example Scott states that "massification is among the most powerful instruments of social change" (Scott, 1995). He goes on to describe the increase of participation beyond a privileged few and the benefit for the individual in terms of social identity and status.

It is important to highlight the distinction between the use of terms 'state' and 'government' in this study. For the purposes of this research the state is seen as generally being continuous, with the government being a temporary element, changing frequently as a part of the political process. A government could itself be considered an agent of the state, existing as a component of a state system. The research also recognises the role of the Government within the United Kingdom is largely to develop and implement policy and to propose laws to Parliament.

A detailed conceptual framework is developed and considered in chapter three of this study, however, a rudimentary framework can be established at this stage derived from the documentary analysis and aid our understanding

of the current discourse analysis regarding institution autonomy. Below, we can see the balance that needs to be met to ensure the interests of the state and that of institutions are best met. We will discover in this chapter that the balance of power has in the past been with the state, particularly with the majority of funding coming directly from the state.

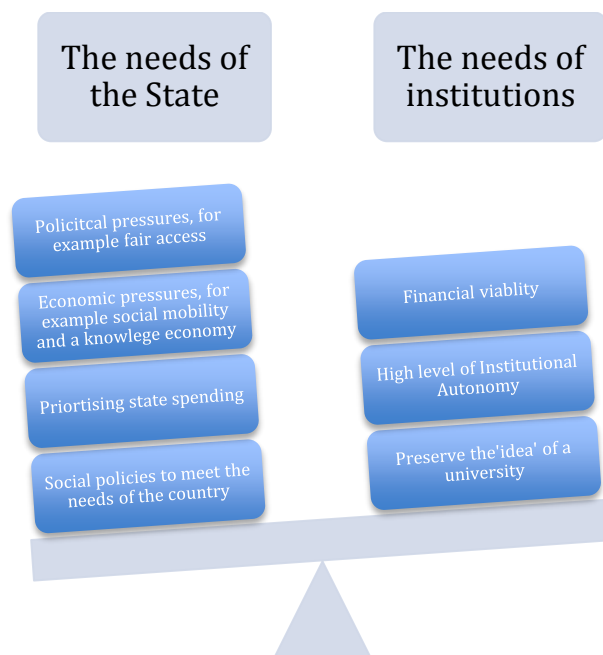


Diagram 1: A framework of relationships between the state and HEIs

The influence the state has on institutions has diminished as the policies of New Public Management (NPM) rebalance the relationship moving towards a consumer model. The NPM policies (Gruening, 2001) are in contrast to the traditional public administration model, with the newer public management model importing private sector approaches. These approaches include user charges, public choice, contracting out, accountability for performance and enhanced consumer participation.

These changes may eventually move the scales in favour of the needs of institutions, as displayed in diagram 1. This change has already taken place in some countries and is explored further in chapter 2, helping us to understand

the impact on the ability of the state to compel institutions to deliver on their social policies.

2. Methodology

This project took a mixed methods approach, combining documentary analysis and comparative analysis with futures studies. Combining a range of complementary approaches, rather than a single method, enhances the reliability of the overall analysis and helps to overcome the weaknesses that can come from adopting a single method (Gaborone, 2006). This strengthens the outcomes of the study with the whole being stronger than the individual elements.

The level of analysis in this research is restricted to the following hierarchical levels, adapted from Tight's work on analysis of HE (Tight, 2012) :

- Nation or country;
- System or arrangement of HE;
- International, considering two or more national systems;
- Futures.

This hierarchy is found as we progress through this study, for example Chapter 1 is primarily analysing the system of HE and Chapter 2 considering different national systems.

Critical review of policy is combined with documentary analysis to aid in researching the system policy. The system policy research helps to address the research questions and is focused on understanding the policy context, national policies and historical policy.

The documentary research is achieved by considering the most relevant policy documents and published research; these are then reviewed within the framework of the research question. The advantage of this method is that it gives access to data which may not be available in others ways. It also helps to reduce any of the ethical issues posed by being an 'insider researcher'. The documentary evidence provides the opportunity to track changes over a period of time.

The mixed methods approach has been chosen as it gives an effective method to investigate system policy and construct a theory on the future direction governments, parties and HEIs may adopt. This takes into account the range of sources of knowledge available and the relevant areas of professional practice. A critical inquiry of policy has been carried out to give an insight into why current policy was devised and its desired outcomes, a policy trajectory study. This is supported by the use of documentary research to compare the origin, theory and implementation of policy and the development of the HE sector. Sources include speeches prior to policy development, manifestos, White Papers and published research, both at the time of an event and at later stages of reflection.

Case studies have been used to support the comparative analysis throughout the study and mini case studies, described as the institutional profiles, to aid the contextual analysis. They have been developed using multiple sources of data and aid the understanding of real-life issues in the context of the political and societal pressures. Realist synthesis was considered as an approach to this review as it can provide an explanatory analysis on the effectiveness of social interventions. This was discounted, as although it has been shown to be effective on simple interventions, it may not have been effective for hierarchical levels of analysis chosen.

Futures studies is a field which runs parallel to the study of history (Anderson, 2011), using the information from the past and present to develop a vision for the future. Anderson outlines the development of futures studies and the later methodologies devised to aid policy makers. It is known by a number of names including foresight research, strategic foresight and futurology, although the names can have slightly different meaning between for practitioners in different areas (Sardar, 2010), essentially the principles are very similar in nature. This area of research is interdisciplinary and sets out to develop a preferred future in a robust way based on evidence and the understanding of the factors that influence the future most. In this study these factors are explored in the first two chapters and support the use of The Six Pillars approach, developed by Inayatullah (2008) and explored in more detail

in Chapter 3. This grounding of the future in the past enables us to anticipate a future scenario/s which can be tested against patterns in history or international comparisons. The futures studies methods have their limitations and are not a cast-iron predictor of future trends or risks. Dator, a leading futures studies researcher, recognises this method does not accurately predict what the future will be. It does aid in planning for the future in a calculated and evidence based way (Dator, 2007).

Within the UK futures research is not commonly used within policy making, however it is gaining popularity and creditability, with for example the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DfBIS) using it to help develop policy in wide variety of areas from climate change to obesity. DfBIS projects include in-depth foresight studies which build an evidence base on major issues looking 20 to 80 years into the future (Science, 2013). The key to the success of future studies is not just relying on the empirical data but giving value and meaning to the data.

This study progresses through the hierarchy of the analysis. This structure enables the foundations for the futures research to be carried out in chapter 3. For example, the comparative analysis of international policy and practice in chapter 2 helps to build evidence for the futures studies scenarios in chapter 3.

Ethical issues

Although this is not a practitioner research study, it does have many of the positive aspects, particularly around one's understanding of the nuances of the chosen sector, HE. This potentially could be fraught with issues from being an 'insider' researcher (Bartunek and Louis, 1996) and perceived lack of impartiality including issues of separating oneself from the issues (McNamee and Bridges, 2002). These risks are addressed by the use of the appropriate research methods outline within the methodology.

Ethical issues may arise as this area of research is a highly politicised and impacts on a number of jobs within the HE sector. It is possible for the research to be perceived as framing WP in a negative light; this could restrict access to key individuals for follow up research, and restrict any data gathering and the use of interviews.

This research has relevance to my own institution and has had support of other senior managers. Although part of my role is to manage and deliver our WP goals, I also understand that the funding for such initiatives is under intense scrutiny and institutions such as UH must find a balance between WP and a range of other priorities, including the need for development of our estate and financial sustainability.

Ethical issues in research in education are well documented as are strategies in dealing with potential issues; this documentation includes books on conducting research in this field (Gregory, 2003) and (Bell, 2005). I have drawn on the literary sources as well as sought the opinion, experience and judgment of my supervisory team.

Institutional Profiles

The institutional profiles of English universities have been used throughout this study to help the reader to understand the impact of WP policies on a diverse spectrum of institutions. It also enables the reader to understand the impact of policies within the hierarchy outlined in the methodology and aids the contextual analysis later in the study. The case studies are sourced from triangulated documentary evidence and researcher-observation. The institutions have been selected to represent the diversity of the English HE sector as it has developed. The limitations of a case study approach have been taken into account and excessive analytic generalisation has been avoided.

University of Hertfordshire

The University of Hertfordshire is a campus-based university located in the county of Hertfordshire. It started life as the Hatfield Technical College in 1952, created to support the skills needed for the nearby de Havilland Aircraft factory. It developed over this time to become one of the Polytechnics in 1969. By 1989 it was awarded corporate status, giving it autonomy from the local authority. It formally became University in 1992, with full degree award powers as part of the national policy reforms creating the post-1992 higher education sector (Davies, 2012).

There has been rapid expansion in student numbers, predominately from WP groups, with there being only 261 full-time students in 1961-62 to over 25,000 students fifty years later.

It is a part of the University Alliance group of universities. In the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data sets (2012/13) they have 25,135 students in total, with the percentage UK domiciled young full-time first-degree entrants from low participation in HE neighbourhoods (based on POLAR3⁸ method) being 6.9%.

The Open University

The Open University is a distance learning institution based in Milton Keynes in the County of Buckinghamshire.

It was established from concepts developed by Michael Young and taken up by the then Prime Minister Harold Wilson and the Minister of the Arts Jennie Lee. The idea was conceived in 1963 as the University of the Air, using technology to give access to higher education to those excluded due to the

⁸ POLAR3 is based on the HE participation rates of people who were aged 18 between 2005 and 2009 and entered a HE course in a UK, aged 18 or 19, between academic years 2005-06 and 2010-11. The POLAR3 classification is formed by ranking 2001 Census Area Statistics (CAS) wards by their young participation rates for the combined 2005 to 2009 cohorts. This gives five quintile groups of areas ordered from '1' (those wards with the lowest participation) to '5' (those wards with the highest participation), each representing 20 per cent of UK young cohort. (HEFCE, 2014)

cost of study. In 1969 the Open University opened for enrolment with an open admissions policy, setting it apart from the other HEIs of the time who based admissions on a set criteria based mainly on previous academic achievement. The content was also delivered in a different way from the traditional methods, with TV programmes and intense residential weekend sessions replacing the lecture theatre seminars and other campus based educational experiences.

It is a part of the University Alliance group of universities, it is however distinctive from the other Alliance members due to the mode of course delivery adopted by the OU. In the latest HESA data sets (2012/13) they have 168,215 students in total. The percentage UK domiciled young full-time first-degree entrants from low participation in HE neighbourhoods (based on POLAR3 method) is not available for 2012/13.

University of Oxford

The University of Oxford is an ancient collegiate research university based in the County of Oxfordshire. The date of its foundation is unknown, however, some form of teaching was taking place from 1096. It was formally recognised as a university in 1231 and was granted a royal charter in 1248. Being a collegiate institution it is now made up of 38 self-governing constituent colleges. It is a member of the Russell Group of Universities. In the latest HESA data sets (2012/13) they have 25,670 students in total, with the percentage from UK domiciled young full-time first-degree entrants low participation in HE neighbourhoods (based on POLAR3 method) being 3.2%.

London Metropolitan University

London Metropolitan University is the product of two universities merging in 2002, London Guildhall University and the University of North London. The London Guildhall University was established in 1992, having previously been the City of London Polytechnic and before that the City of London College. It can trace its roots back further to 1848 and the establishment of the

‘Metropolitan Evening Classes for Young Men’ by the then Bishop of London, Charles Blomfield.

The University of North London started out as the Northern Polytechnic Institute in 1896, later offering degrees accredited by the University of London. In 1992 it gained degree awarding powers of its own and adopted the title of The University of North London

London Metropolitan University is affiliated to the Million+ group of universities. In the latest HESA data sets (2012/13) they have 18,135 students in total, with the percentage from UK domiciled young full-time first-degree entrants low participation in HE neighbourhoods (based on POLAR3 method) being 6%.

Lancaster University

Lancaster University was established as one of the seven new ‘plate glass universities’. These universities were established at a time when there were less than 10,000 students in only nine UK institutions. Lancaster was given its royal charter in 1964 to help meet the demands of a growing sector. The first Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir Charles Carter quipped at the time that the role of the new university was to “civilize the North”(Lancaster, 2014). The statement, however well-meaning, demonstrates an unfortunate attitude of superiority that neglects to recognise the long history of institutions such as Victoria University of Manchester and the King's College Newcastle (University of Durham).

It is a member of the N8 group of self-designated research-intensive universities in Northern England and was a member of The 1994 Group until its dissolution in November 2013. In the latest HESA data sets (2012/13) they have 12,740 students in total, with the percentage UK domiciled young full-time first-degree entrants from low participation in HE neighbourhoods (based on POLAR3 method) being 12.2%.

Chapter 1: The binary system of Higher Education in England

The economic and political environment has had a significant influence on the evolution of Higher Education within the UK. The relationship between the state and universities often leads to questions around autonomy and purpose of HE. This chapter highlights the importance of the external environment, the context for the evolution.

Barnett in his book 'Being a University' states "Universities no longer enjoy, if indeed they ever did, an autonomy in which they can be fully themselves" (Barnett, 2011, p96). Institutional autonomy is fettered by the need for funding; the financial power that governments wield over HEIs' funding dominates their activity (Henkel and Little, 1998). This chapter demonstrates that the potential for HEIs to have greater freedom, combined with the possibility that they have failed to drive social change, introduces a debate on the value of the optimistic social mobility policy initiatives in Higher Education. This debate draws on the evidence that low participation groups, such as applicants from low income backgrounds, are not being effectively engaged by HE, and, furthermore, arguments around the disintegration of identity and "Idea" of HE: 'the price is that this success may not actually be what current societal needs require in terms of future expectations' (Fisher, 2006, p11).

The 'Idea of a University'

If we are to establish if the idea has been eroded, we must first understand what is meant by the 'Idea of a University'. A good place to start is *The Idea of a University* (Newman, 1873), written by Cardinal Newman, which looks at the purpose of universities. Newman sought to move away from the accepted views of the day on universities, the principle of utility, research before all other functions. Newman was a supporter of a liberal education, believing that the whole person can be educated beyond purely gaining knowledge but gaining values and contributing more to society. Newman's views are of course heavily influenced by his religion, as were universities at the time.

Today, our universities are largely secular however the influence of the concept of a liberal education is pervasive across the sector.

Kerr believed that Newman's view of a social university was no longer relevant (Kerr, 1995). Newman's preference was for the liberal arts, taking issue with professional or utilitarian education, as opposed to Kerr's concept of a 'Multiversity'. The 'multiversity' can be seen as a dynamic community of many faculties with graduate, undergraduates, and the non-academics. All of these groups interacting with wider external communities including business, Alumni, schools and local authorities. In the later edition of Kerr's book he sought to clarify further what he meant by 'multiversity' stating that he thought it was a 'pluralistic' institution with multiple purposes, stakeholders and customers. The internal conflict brought about by this type of university is seen by Kerr as a real weakness compared to the universities based on a religious or political ideology.

Barnett supports some of the theory of 'multiversity', identifying there are many sub-communities and in fact indicates that it would be misleading to consider academia as a community in its own right (Barnett, 1990). He distinguishes *higher education* from the term *university* identifying that these can have very different meanings. Although the institutions are important in Higher Education, they are not essential. He suggests the 'Idea of a University' has evolved over time; recognising the value to an individual and society. He explores the emancipatory concept in higher education, giving individuals greater freedom through 'self-insight and self-evaluation'. This is similar to some of the 'third way' theory used by the 'New' Labour party in the late nineties. There are some who contend that there is no longer a shared definition of the meaning of university today, Smith and Webster discuss this within *The Postmodern University: Contested visions of Higher Education* (Smith and Webster, 1997). It is argued that the evolution of the sector and the consequences of massification have played a major part in diminishing the 'Idea of a University' within such a diverse sector.

Barnett's later book, *Beyond All Reasons: Living with Ideology in the University* (Barnett, 2003), discusses the concept that the idea of a university is now firmly in the past. It is recognised that there is no ideal institution or a golden past with a perfect autonomous sector. It can also be concluded that those who reminisce about the idea of the university are basing this on their ideology rather than fact. Barnett however identifies that universities are not meeting the expectations of all of the stakeholders. This is further supported by the struggle to define what 'university' means (Allen, 1988). Allen is critical of universities for not being clearer in the past about their goals, assuming everyone knows what a university is for and the value for society that it offers. His recommendations are in the spirit of a multiversity however he desires legislation for this 'Idea of a University', which is much like the desire of the previous government's 'Framework for Higher Education'. He sees that the purpose of university is largely indefinable as it is a matter of judgment rather than something that can be defined by scientific research.

There are some, such as Jaspers, that see the role of HE primarily within research, 'seeking of truth' (Jaspers, 1960) as he states is done through research and disseminated by teaching. In contrast, the philosopher Ortega y Gasset has a teacher-centred view of the 'Idea of a University' (Ortega y Gasset, 1946). He does not value research in the same way as Jaspers, adopting a utilitarian approach, reached in the context of post-war Spain. Clark identifies the differences in purpose between European universities and the American institutions (Clark, 1984). He identifies the greater levels of state intervention found in the European systems and how this influences the purpose of universities as well as the private sector. He dismisses the theory that institutions have developed primarily in the advancement of 'higher learning in society'.

The 'Idea of a University' may be difficult to define, however the level of autonomy from the state will have an effect on the nature of an institution and its activities. This is particularly relevant today with pressures on public finances, with a growing number of cases being made for greater independence from the state both in regulation and in collective purpose

(Burgh et al., 2007). The literature looking at the 'Idea of a University' draws out a traditionally perceived purpose; generally that there is social good to be gained from Higher Education and that it can have multiple purposes. There is also a very loose consensus developing around the 'Idea of a University' and whether it exists in the modern world with such diverse sectors in existence. It can be concluded that the 'Idea of a University' is different depending on the stakeholder, for example the former Government Minister Peter Mandelson wanting managerial autonomy balanced with contributing to a "collective national strategic vision" (Mandelson, 2009). This conflicts with certain elements of the sector that want autonomy both managerially and from a political agenda, which includes them contributing to the social justice agendas of government. This tension is just one factor in raising the question about what collectively can be achieved between the state and an increasingly diversified sector. In many ways similar to the thoughts about 'The Idea of a University', the concept of social mobility in higher education is contested, with little evidence of the impact of the interventions and the literature drawing attention to the constant changes in strategy and the use of political rhetoric.

A changing environment?

The following section documents the influence of the reforms in higher education at key points relevant to the research question, with a particular emphasis on 1992 when the Further and Higher Education Act sought to end the binary divide bringing together the funding councils and transforming the polytechnics into universities. These reforms created a number of new institutions, which had the capacity to expand their intake and appeal to a wide range of society. It is important to understand the new powers successive Secretaries of State for Education gained, giving them the ability to direct the work of the funding councils. We learn later how this power, although restricted, gave the ability for universities to be directed through funding to fulfil the political policy agendas of the government (DfE, 1992).

Higher Education (HE) and the government, of all political persuasions, have over years developed an intense and often turbulent relationship of mutual dependence. Successive governments have developed policies that have compelled the sector to develop in ways to meet the national policy agendas, arguably the most significant of these is the policy goals of massification (Trow, 1972), knowledge economy and the agenda surrounding social mobility. This chapter examines the impact of this relationship, tracing the major policy initiatives through their development over the years. The interventionist policies devised to increase participation offer timely examples of the current and past governments' desire to shape the sector to fulfil their own political aims.

State influence on British universities is not a modern phenomenon; King James II attempted to exert power over the self-governed Oxford and Cambridge Universities in 1687 by removing their charters and influencing the involvement of the churches (Richards, 1997). These attempts failed and James II was removed from power a year later; however it marked a change in power with the church previously being the main influencer in the governance of universities.

Since the introduction by the government of the University Grants Committee (UGC) in 1919, the state has had a direct link influence on the development of the HE sector. The UGC⁹ was a forerunner to the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) distributing government funds to universities, and it was initially operated from the Treasury rather than the Department for Education (Gillard, 2007). Its budget was relatively modest in comparison to today's funding council at only £1 million in comparison to £7.291 billion in 2010-11 (HEFCE 2010). The UGC, although constituted "to enquire into the financial needs of university education in the United Kingdom and to advise the government of any grants that may be made by Parliament to meet them",

⁹ The role UGC differed from that of HEFCE, with its members being senior academics who advised the state on education policy. It also noted there was less scrutiny of the financial outgoings of the UGC compared to HEFCE.

initially exerted very little influence over institutions (Salter and Tapper, 2002, p245-256).

The first sign of government initiating a form of social mobility within higher education through legislation was with the introduction of the 1944 Education Act (Sullivan, 1980). This was a radical act that removed much of the previous education legislation. The then Conservative-led war government introduced mechanisms to encourage a wider range of people to access higher education. These measures included scholarships, bursaries and further state aid. Two years later the Labour government gave the UGC an enhanced role to formulate plans to develop universities “in order to ensure they are fully adequate to national needs” (Richards, 1997). This may not be the beginning of the knowledge economy, as we know it today, however it was a recognition that universities would play a role in social change in post-war Britain. The end of the war had brought about great social change, an erosion of the class system within Britain and greater diversity through immigration. The following statement from Green and Renton within the conclusion of a paper for EAIR emphasises the duality of purpose: “The post-war reconstruction did look to expand HE to raise the scientific knowledge base, but what is striking is the politicians’ emphasis on values, their belief that HE, when properly constituted, builds and shapes, society and nationhood.” (Green and Renton, 2009, p6).

The concept of funding being the barrier to access continued into the 1960s with the Anderson Committee investigating a system of grants which would support the commitment of a major expansion in higher education and ensure “those qualified to take advantage of these costly facilities are not deterred from doing so” (Anderson, 1960). There was no mention of the notion of motivation or social barriers to progressing, which probably reflected the fact that the expansion would potentially affect the middle classes more than any other group in society. This is evident when the Newson report (Great Britain. Committee on Training for Business and Smith, 1945) showed the low levels of attainment in 13-16 year olds.

The barriers to accessing higher education

It is important to understand the historical barriers to WP in HE, which informs the framework for the futures research later in this study. This section also highlights the role of the state in attempts to overcoming these barriers and the associated levels of autonomy. In the 1800s various barriers to accessing HE existed, some of these are similar to modern barriers, such as the significant costs involved. The barrier at that time, which no longer has relevance in English university admissions, was the requirement to pass a religious test. This was to satisfy the Church, a practical demonstration of the lack of autonomy institutions had from the Church. The first Statement by the Council of the University of London in 1827 highlighted these barriers and called for the 'foundation of another University in England' (Council, 1927). This heralded the beginning of a new type of university in 1836, the University of London.

The University of London facilitated an expansion in higher education through its degree awarding powers, including to the civic colleges outside of London. (Sanderson, 1975). Civic universities developed in the late nineteenth century, as civic colleges, to support the local economy and promote social progress. Their growth was aided by industrialisation and the associated demand for professionally-oriented courses at the time. They were distinct from the traditional 'Oxbridge approach' to higher education in developing courses designed to meet the needs of society (Sanderson, 1988). This utilitarian direction in HE has similarities with the Humboldt approach in Germany in the 1800s, a state-led education system designed to reward merit and produce enlightened citizens, with education as an instrument for social change (Green and Renton, 2009).

In 1853, The Science and Art Department of the Board of Trade had a significant role in the development of technical education. Three years after its establishment, the Science and Art Department transferred to the Education Department. The Department administered the grant-aid to art schools, schools of design and technical schools (from 1868). The introduction of the

Technical Instruction Act 1889 allowed local authorities to raise funds to develop technical education. This facilitated the expansion of technical education and importantly gave access to an expanded further education sector to the 'working-classes' (Floud and Glynn, 1998).

The post-war governments looked to technical education as a way to increase economic prosperity. This desire resulted in policies to expand technical and higher education. The Colleges of Advanced Technology (CATs) were established as a result of the white paper on technical education in 1956 (Morrish, 1970), this paper sought to address the deficit in technically trained staff available to industry. Twenty-five CATs were proposed to meet the needs of industry across the country. The colleges were to offer higher education outside of the traditional university sector. The local authorities administered the funding for these colleges until 1961, when funding was transferred directly to central government in the form of grants. The Robbins report would later recommend the transfer of these colleges to the university sector.

Weakening the barriers

The Education Act in 1962 introduced by the then Conservative government looked to support students entering Higher Education by compelling the Local Education Authorities to support students' maintenance and tuition. This was followed by the Robbins review and subsequent report in 1963, which was a major and far-reaching investigation of the provision of higher education.

The terms of reference for the Robbins Review were:

to review the pattern of full-time higher education in Great Britain and in the light of national needs and resources to advise Her Majesty's Government on what principles its long-term development should be based. In particular, to advise, in the light of these principles, whether there should be any changes in that pattern, whether any new types of

institution are desirable and whether any modifications should be made in the present arrangements for planning and co-ordinating the development of the various types of institution. (Robbins, 1963, p2)

The report detailed the vision that the “courses of higher education should be made available to all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them”(Robbins, 1963, p9) . It was the first move towards true massification and in turn emphasised the importance of education to help the development of the country¹⁰. This was being proposed in the background by the subsequent Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, promised “white heat”¹¹ of a new technological revolution, with announcements designed to appeal to the aspirant skilled working class who were finding the Labour Party less appealing in a more affluent post war Britain. It is worth noting Robbins did advocate institutional autonomy and academic freedom, however, the report did state “the selection of students should not only be fair, but also that they should be seen to be fair”.

In 1964, another symbolic change was made, when the ministerial post elevated to the senior role of Secretary of State. At this time the UGC was moved into the Department for Education and Science, moving from a fairly light form of influence through the treasury, to a more politically charged policy driven model, which was seen as part of a wider education policy framework (Willmott, 1995). This reduced the level of autonomy of universities in relation to the state, in response to the rapid expansion of the sector and increased financial scrutiny. Two years later, polytechnics were established to provide a vocational and academic education designed for the progression into work. These would provide a route for those from ‘working-class’ backgrounds to access higher education in greater numbers than ever before¹².

¹⁰ Further background to these developments can be found in the Lancaster University institutional case study earlier in this study.

¹¹ Harold Wilson, 'Speech opening the Science Debate at the Party's Annual Conference, Scarborough, 1963', Purpose and politics: selected speeches (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), p.27

¹² The Open University institutional case study earlier in the study provides further background to developments in HE occurring at this time.

The politics of the Binary Divide

A year after coming to power in 1964, the Labour Secretary of State for Education and Science, Anthony Crosland, delivered a speech at Woolwich Polytechnic that signalled the establishment of the 'binary system' of higher education (Ross, 2003) giving five reasons for accepting the dual/binary system. Crosland wished to elevate the status of polytechnics to match that of the autonomous universities, he believed that by increasing the importance of vocational skills, the country would be able to meet the needs of industry and remain competitive. In his view the universities of the time were unable to sufficiently provide for the demand in vocational and professional courses. Crosland, a former Oxford Don and economist, outlined his ideological position in his 1956 book 'The Future of Socialism' (Crosland and Leonard, 2006) where he stressed the need for social equality and the influence of education in reaching this goal. He saw education as the principal driver of inequality and, although he was less radical in government, he sought to reform education at all levels. Through his writing he helped to define the role of the post-war Labour Party and influenced the later 'New Labour project', which is discussed later in this chapter. Crosland also had a desire to ensure that these higher education institutions would be at some level controlled directly by government to respond to societal needs (White, 2001). Two years later a White Paper 'A Plan for Polytechnics and Other Colleges' made the recommendation that the Government should re-designate a number of key colleges as polytechnics, large regional institutions offering a range of modes of study including sandwich courses (White, 2001). This decision to introduce a binary system, it seems was made predominantly on an ideological basis, with Crosland receiving criticism from one Senior Civil Servant that there was a great deal of ignorance about what the universities were actually like in 1966 (Shattock, 2012).

The national financial problems and rising student numbers of the late seventies and eighties saw a number of cuts to student support including the removal of grants, social security benefits and a reduction of new legislation

relating to Higher Education. The first discussions began on the introduction of student loans but did not progress to a change in legislation until the late 1980s. During this period high levels of unemployment were an increasing issue for the government and a focus was given to training (Parsons, 1990) including the introduction of the Youth Training Scheme (YTS). The Education Reform Act of 1988 stated "local education authority shall no longer be under a duty to secure the provision for their area of facilities for higher education". This effectively broke the link between the LEAs and allowed colleges of higher education and polytechnics to become corporations (Tapper, 2007). The Act is said to have stimulated a public debate on the relationship of government with Higher Education, arguably more control now being held centrally. This further facilitated the changes in the way funding was made available, by the introduction of the Universities Funding Council (UFC) and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC).

In 1991, The Committee of Directors of Polytechnics lobbied the government to end the binary divide. They wanted to compete with universities on numbers and quality, facilitating the expansion of higher education. That year the government proposed a white paper reforming further and higher education. The Prime Minister, John Major, introduced the bill by saying the end of the divide would "build on our plans to transform education and training for 16 to 19-year-olds by removing the barriers between the academic and vocational streams" (THES, 2002). The motivation for this announcement may have been less altruistic than this statement suggests, with the potential for the changes to influence a reduction in the cost to the state and accountability in a time of mass HE (Kim, 2008, p35). The Directors were given their wishes with the implementation of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The Robbins Report had remained influential throughout this period and many of the recommendations were implemented until 1992 when the Further and Higher Education Act ended the binary divide bringing together the funding

councils and transforming the polytechnics into universities.¹³ This automatically created a number of new institutions, which had the capacity to expand their intake and appeal to a wider range of society. At the same time the legislation gave the Secretary of State for Education the ability to direct the work of the funding councils. This power, although restricted, gave the ability for Universities to be directed through funding to fulfil the policy agendas of the Government (DfE, 1992).

This could be seen as an inevitable next step following the reforms of 1988 to move the polytechnics away from local authority control. The administration of the system was also reformed, with scrapping of the UFC and the PCFC. These bodies were replaced with a single funding council for England, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). In addition to funding, HEFCE had an additional role in the regulation of the quality of education, five year later this would later be passed to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). In addition, the act also removed LEA control from further education, with the view that the removal of local control will promote expansion in the same way as it did in Higher Education. The Green Paper that proceeded the act attempted to give additional powers to the Secretary of State, in a similar attempt to control the sector as proposed for the Education Reform Act of 1988. The House of Lords again raised opposition and the powers to influence course portfolio, teaching and assessment was abandoned.

The degree-awarding powers for many of the polytechnics came from the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA), established in 1965. The awards given by the CNAA were comparable to degrees offered by universities. The 1992 UK Further and Higher Education Act abolished the CNNA and transferred the degree awarding powers directly to these new universities (DfE, 1992). This allowed them to operate in the same way as any of the older universities, giving a potential parity of esteem. These reforms

¹³ Both the University of Hertfordshire and the merged HEIs that form the London Metropolitan University are examples of post-92 institutions, further details can be found earlier in the study within the institutional profiles section.

resulted in the only major barrier left to increasing participation in higher education being fiscal and cultural constraints. These remained some of the biggest barriers throughout the next twenty years of policy reforms.

The Dearing Committee

The largest review of higher education since Robbins was commissioned by the Conservative government in 1997 and led by Sir Ron Dearing, who had previously conducted reviews into school age education making recommendations that would make education more accessible.

The terms of reference for The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, the Dearing Committee Report (Dearing, 1997) were as follows:

To make recommendations on how the purposes, shape, structure, size and funding of higher education, including support for students, should develop to meet the needs of the United Kingdom over the next 20 years, recognising that higher education embraces teaching, learning, scholarship and research.

The recommendations from his National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education included further expansion of the HE sector through the growth of sub degree level qualifications and a system which would allow a sustained increase in student numbers by abolishing fully funded fees and introducing a system of varying contribution dependent on the parental income of the student. This partially progressive support system would see the largest increase in numbers in the history of the sector.

The UK 'New' Labour party set out its stall early on its intentions for an expanded HE system, massification, both in their submissions to the Dearing Committee (Dearing, 1997) as well as stating in the 1997 election manifesto that the cost of an expanded system should partly be funded by graduates on an income basis, citing the success of such policies abroad. The system of mass HE was not initiated by New Labour, however it was embraced and

developed far beyond the path begun by the previous Conservative government. The then Prime Minister, Rt Hon. Tony Blair, made a bold announcement at the 1999 Labour party conference, stating that 'Today I set a target of 50 per cent of young adults going into higher education in the next century '(Blair, 1999). The relatively new government of the 1990s was heavily influenced by the previous Conservative administration's Dearing Committee recommendations (Dearing, 1997) and continued the principles of differentiation within the sector.

However, there was a major policy shift in 2000, when the then Education Minister, David Blunkett, announced far-reaching reforms. He made particularly clear the support for wider participation and social inclusion. He also legislated to outlaw the introduction of variable fees, which were first suggested by Howard Newby, the then chair of the representative organisation for Vice Chancellors. This protection against variable fees was later removed in the Education Act 2004 (BIS, 2004).

The target of 50 per cent participation by 2010 may well have proven to be out of reach; with some critics at the time indicating that the goal would not be achieved until beyond 2015. But policy initiatives relating to WP led to a well-resourced industry within UK HE. £239.5m was allocated to the Aimhigher programme for 2008-2011 and a further £352m directly to institutions for WP in 2008-09 (HEFCE, 2009). This stood in contrast to a static trend in teaching funding, in a context of increasing student numbers. Looking at these developments is particularly relevant for the sector, with a Fees Review (Lord Browne) in 2010, and a General Election producing a coalition government made up of the main opposition parties to the previous Labour government. This was also the year the deadline for achieving the manifesto target of 50% participation was to have been met (Labour, 2001).

Policy and political convergence

Prior to the 2010 election all the manifestoes of the three main parties (Labour Party, 2010) (Conservative Party, 2010) (Liberal Democrat Party, 2010)

identified the importance of social mobility, however, the emphasis was placed on school level attainment, drawing attention between the underperformance of those from low-income backgrounds. The state intervention outlined in the election manifestos was primarily targeted at school level education with proposals from the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats for a pupil premium ensuring that funding is more directly linked to a pupil's level of poverty.

The manifesto documents omitted references to the established initiatives linked with widening participation in Higher Education such as Aimhigher, implemented to expand and widen participation. The Labour manifesto suggested that the state would put pressure on universities to expand their activity in WP particularly talking about targeted intensive interventions. The research intensive Russell Group of universities were singled out as a group which had to expand its activity to encourage those from low income backgrounds into HE. The Conservative manifesto was far less directive in promoting WP, saying they would promote fair access. The Liberal Democrats put much of the emphasis on the financial barrier for the individual student and reaffirmed their commitment to abolishing tuition fees. Both the opposition parties made it clear that they would not compel universities to expand their numbers and would remove the target of 50% participation. Significantly, Labour made no mention of the 50% target, replacing it with a lower aspiration around progression to HE and technical education such as apprenticeships. This was partially echoed by the Liberal Democrats indicating that they would want to see a closer relationship between vocational and academic qualifications (Woods, 2010).

The Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance (The Browne Report) which was launched on the 9th November 2009 was intended to have a significant impact on the future direction of HE and particularly on the number of students within the sector, the level of funding autonomy institutions may have, and the level of support for WP students.

The terms of reference for the Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance, Browne Review:

The Review will analyse the challenges and opportunities facing higher education and their implications for student financing and support. It will examine the balance of contributions to higher education funding by taxpayers, students, graduates and employers. Its primary task is to make recommendations to Government on the future of fees policy and financial support for full and part time undergraduate and postgraduate students. (Browne, 2010)

This review had many similarities to the Dearing review, which was also launched towards the end of a parliament to address a controversial issue. The report also influenced the policy decisions of the then new government, however, many of the more radical changes, such as changes to the regulation of HE, were never introduced.

The results of the UK election in 2010 produced no overall majority and the Conservatives entered a coalition agreement with the Liberal Democrats. The new coalition government produced an outline of its plans for government as a product of negotiations between the two parties (Government, 2010). The document outlined a number of intended changes for education including removing 'state control' from further education colleges. They deferred any major decisions on the funding of the sector until the reporting of the Browne review, however they did outline it would be judged against the following:

- increase in social mobility;
- the impact on student debt;
- ensure a properly funded university sector;
- improve the quality of teaching;
- advance scholarship;
- attract a higher proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Importantly the documents also outline a desire for a more consumer-focused relationship making information on costs, graduate earnings and student satisfaction available in more details. This could be seen as an early indication of a change in relationship between the HE sector, student and the state. The sociologist Frank Furedi states these 'marketisation' ideologies seeks to make the sector "more responsive to the needs of society, the economy, students and parents." (Molesworth et al., 2010). However, in this case the needs of society are not being met by the state but by the demands of the market, a stark move away from the previous interventionist approach.

The newly appointed Minister for Universities and Science, David Willetts indicated in his first speech as minister a desire not to overly influence what universities should be teaching. He defended the so-called "Mickey Mouse" degrees and stated, "To me, the only Mickey Mouse degree is one that's mediocre, or sloppy, or lacking rigour and depth. Beyond that, I'm not going to judge what people study or what colleges and universities offer. Diverse provision of a high quality can only be a good thing. My aim is to make sure that students have all the information they need to make a well-informed decision about the value of a course." (Willetts, 2010). The recognition was given that the state has had significant control over the sector outlining his determination to avoid "clunky, bureaucratic controls". He outlined his belief that the strength of our universities comes largely from the autonomy they are given from the State.

He outlined that governments must respect the autonomy of universities and made clear he will support this by developing a wide range of "diverse funding streams and institutional arrangements" (Willetts, 2010).

The announcements made by Willetts (2010) regarding autonomy could be seen as signalling a change in the nature of how the state interacts with universities, but it is worth noting that these assurances have been made before. In one example from the previous administration, John Denham, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, at the 2007

Universities UK Conference claimed, “we will also respect and nurture your institutional autonomy. That autonomy makes you much more able to deliver what the nation needs. Each institution must determine the role it develops within the Higher Education system.” (Denham, 2007).

The intentions of David Willetts may well have been to encourage autonomy, however, this may become more difficult if student fees rise and the cap on student numbers is changed. Public and political pressure and the desire to ensure that participation from lower income groups does not recede and in my view may well force future Ministers of State to use HEFCE as a lever to compel institutions to fulfil policy initiatives around social mobility.

In June 2011 the government published a higher education White Paper. This outlined a number of reforms that set out to address the barriers to expansion and social mobility (BIS, 2011). This included many of the Browne report recommendations. It also sought to address the financial barrier to expansion by moving the burden of cost further from the State and onto the student. The White Paper looked to implement a new regulatory framework that would allow for greater diversity within the sector and increased student choice. Although a Bill was never materialised as a result of the White Paper, many of the reforms were implemented without the need for parliamentary approval.

A government funded HE sector in England has allowed for the expansion of student numbers, diverse providers and to some extent a democratisation of higher education. At the time of the publication of the Robbins report in 1963 there were nearly 130,000 students in university. Robbins projected this number would grow to 346,000 by 1980-81. The actual figures in 1980-81 were 307,000, only 11% under the prediction. Expansion rapidly flourished after the reforms of 1992, with 1,210,000 studying in University by 2000-01. The ending of the binary divide delivered the expansion set out in the reforms. The changes in society have also helped to make higher education more accessible, in 1961-62 only 25% of students at university were women, by 2011-12 54% were women (Willetts, 2013). The challenges of increasing participation would have inevitably changed over the period, this includes the

changes in demographics such as the decline of size of the young population (Willetts, 2013). This demographic dip is, however, is short term and by the 2020s the demand for HE will recover and rise above current numbers.

The divide that remains?

In theory, the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 was designed to signal a move from a binary to a unitary HE system. In practice, it could be argued, a divide remains with the vast majority of non-traditional students studying in post-1992 universities rather than the pre-1992 institutions (Gorard et al., 2006). The challenge to the assertion that the divide ended in 1992 is further supported by Professor Peter Scott, former Vice-Chancellor of Kingston University in an article in the Guardian: "Ten years ago, things were better. When I moved from a Russell Group to a 'post-1992' university I had no sense of crossing a great divide. Most people assumed the old distinction between universities and polytechnics was fading away. But today it feels different. The drive is towards so-easy-to-decode "differentiation". There appears to be widespread, and growing, regret in political and academic establishments that the divisive binary system was ever abolished." (Scott, 2012).

Despite these concerns, it seemed that possibly the quickest and easiest way to promote expansion in the sector to meet demand was to end the binary divide (Willetts, 2013). The English system of polytechnics was developed in a context of societal and industrial change in post-war Britain; in other countries the English polytechnics could easily have been called universities.

In the same way that the Clark-Trow typology (Terenzini and Pascarella, 1977) of students helps us better understand the environment in which students exist it is useful to look at the typologies that exist where there are divisions between institutions. In this case there are at least three main segments of the sector, each facing their own challenges with regards to relations with the state. In each case, there are tensions between institutional autonomy and government policy objectives around economic prosperity and social mobility through HE participation.

In the institutions with the most dependence on the state, with less historic capital and public reputation, the challenges are perhaps the greatest. A

sector with a greater level of 'student choice' and diversity could make these institutions less competitive. The lower entry tariffs and the lack of distinction between university education and HE in FE raise important questions about their autonomy and viability. The importance of these institutions could be in meeting the needs of increased social mobility and technical/utilitarian education, similar to the Colleges of Advanced Technology (CATs).

The second segment, highly selective and research-intensive institutions, is likely to seek further autonomy from government. In a consumer-focused sector these institutions will have the ability to charge higher fees and will be able to retain their distinctiveness within a diverse sector. It is likely that the public and political pressure on these institutions to widen access to able students from underrepresented groups will remain.

Between these two segments are a significant number of institutions that benefited from expansion of the sector following the ending of the binary divide. These institutions, within a highly competitive sector, are already struggling to differentiate themselves. This will become more of a problem as funding continues to move away from government. The role of these institutions in economic prosperity will become increasingly important, with some already attempting to differentiate themselves with titles such as Enterprise University and Business Facing. Perhaps for some in this group the term polytechnic will have renewed relevance and distinctiveness within the sector. Although these typologies are useful in understanding the current environment, they can be simplified even further into two divided groups, the old and the new.

Summary

This chapter has examined the 'problem' and 'causes' layers of the Causal Layered Analysis found in chapter 3, used as part of the futures analysis. The first layer is the analysis of the current problem e.g. Universities failing to adequately widen participation to Higher Education. The second layer is the historical and social analysis showing the trends and changes in policy. Each

stage of this study builds the foundations for the futures work and aids our understanding of likely outcomes of different future scenarios.

This chapter has demonstrated that the political and economic environment has had an inescapable influence on the development of universities, and higher education more generally. Universities were once the preserve of those from privileged backgrounds; now many cater to a mass market, meeting the demands of over a third of the population. The portfolio of subjects has also evolved, with courses such as Event Management, Paramedic Science and nursing, and with this change, the balance has moved from the liberal arts to vocational courses. The divide between institutions has moved from the binary system of universities and polytechnics, to a new and unplanned divide between the old and new institutions.

The preoccupation with the state to redefine the sector to meet economic and ideological goals, ultimately seeking to influence HE to increase social mobility, has done little to influence the role of universities as an instrument of social change. This role is discussed further within chapter 2, including comparisons with other countries. The post-war changes in England have achieved massification, increasing participation without necessarily widening the participation of groups from lower social economic groups. It is difficult to say if it has distracted from the 'Idea of University' (Newman, 1873), outlined in the beginning of this chapter, with this concept being so highly contested anyway. But it is likely it has restricted the debate on the value of a diverse system. The evidence within this chapter suggests that the interventionist policies to increase social mobility, and thus widen participation, have failed to meet the needs of either the sector or state. This supports the need for a new model of relationship between the state, which is explored further in chapter 3.

Chapter 2: Understanding the impact of institutional autonomy on the ability to respond to societal demands

This chapter investigates what role institution autonomy plays in the ability of institutions to respond to societal demands, using Widening Participation policies as the example. These WP policies are not unique to England and internationally they are also implicitly linked to a drive towards knowledge economies, massification and the autonomy of Higher Education. It examines how in many countries this has combined with inevitable marketisation and has made it more difficult for governments to retain traditional controls on the sector (Williams, 1992). This has posed problems for a government who wish for the sector to adopt a collective position or policy without financial incentives being in place. Hence universities in these countries may be drawn to pursue agendas for economic benefits rather than necessarily for public good (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004).

The term widening participation might not be commonly used internationally, however, the issues of social mobility and the under-representation of certain groups are found in many nations. There is much that can be learned by looking at the international case studies presented later within this chapter. They form part of the mapping process, outlined in the future studies methodology in chapter 3, by identifying the historical factors and patterns that have created the present. These case studies explore the development of WP policies in the context of a changing sector and the diversity of approaches to institutional autonomy. They help us understand the different roles of the institutions as ‘agents’ of the state, despite the examples having diverse cultural, political and financial environments.

The Swedish Government, for example, had also set a 50 per cent target through the Open Higher Education Bill in 2001 (Harvey, 2005). In recent years Sweden has been more successful than the UK in widening

participation into higher education, doubling the number of students from working class backgrounds in ten years. The financial spend has also been significantly lower: £3M in the three years from 2001. Swedish universities, however, often redirected their own funds into projects that fit their strategic aims in WP. This approach is being pursued in the UK by the current government.

Finland has very high participation rate with 70 per cent of school leavers being offered a post-secondary place in education (James, 2003). This success is attributed to a regional policy principle called *Aluepolitiikka*, introduced in the 1960s, to achieve cultural and economic impact in a region through establishing Open Universities. These introduce WP students to HE and offer them a defined progression route. A similar policy to those was introduced within the England in the nineties to encourage a closer link between the further education sector and Universities. This policy has been more successful within Scotland which has a very different system of student support initiated through the report produced by Andrew Cubie in 1999 (Cubie, 1999) for the Labour-Liberal Democrat Scottish coalition Government. This saw a system of lower fees and higher support for Scottish students as opposed to the plans that were being considered by the British Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon. David Blunkett, at the time. Scotland also merged the funding councils for Further and Higher Education in a largely symbolic move to bring the sectors closer together. These elements combined with the success of the FE sector as a pipeline to HEIs, offering HND programmes, saw Scotland meet the 50% target before the rest of the UK (SFHEFC, 2009).

Finland has followed a policy of reducing state funding to HE, a trend similar to that following massification in the UK, where between 1977 and 1997 public expenditure per student fell by 40 per cent (Shelley, 2005). From August 2009, a new Finnish model has taken HEIs out of state administration and offers greater autonomy, giving them an ability to operate in an international marketised HE sector (Government, 2009).

The following mini case studies outline the development of WP policies within a number of countries with different education systems and funding models of HE. They have been selected to highlight the diversity within the international sector. Importantly for this study the countries selected have a limited number of shared social policy goals. The case studies look at a range of key historical aspects that have influenced the development of the policies. The main focus of the analysis is on the post-war development of WP policies, which occurred often in conjunction with the growth in student numbers, institutions and greater diversification of the sector. Each case study also highlights the influence of the political ideologies on the development of the WP policies and these ideologies have influenced the level of autonomy between Governments and the institutions.

Case Study 1: Sweden

Sweden has long had policy goals to widen participation, starting in the post war 1940s with proposals being made for the allocation of a place to those excluded in society, referred to as the 'Ability Reserve' (Berggren and Cliffordson, 2012). However, the significant changes have occurred over the past 40 years, in particular the focus has been on widening access from under-represented groups. These groups include adult learners who may have missed out on the opportunity earlier in life and have experience of the workplace, known as the 25/5 rule due to the target group being over 25yrs and having at least 5 years employment (Kim, 1979). This model was one of the earliest examples of a European government intervening at such a detailed level to WP. This was potentially made easier by the structure of HE within Sweden at that time, having a highly centralised model. Although these policies have sometimes been politically contentious, with arguments sometimes being made about the value of quality over quantity, generally there has been a consistent commitment to WP by successive Governments. This consistency is in part facilitated by the domination of the Social Democratic Workers' Party, governing either in coalition or alone.

The 25/5 rule was part of a series of reforms beginning in 1977 to improve WP and to increase participation overall, with the opening of regional HE colleges and the central coordination of HE at college and university. These reforms were designed to also address the problems the country was facing in addressing the inequality in provision of HE within the different regions of Sweden.

Institutions were given greater freedom in 2011 as part of a de-centralisation of the HE system within Sweden. This greater autonomy was to allow institutions to develop to meet the demands of being within an international market. Despite these reforms to meet a changing market, only 15% of funding is from non-governmental sources.

Recent reforms have seen the establishment of two national regulatory bodies, the Swedish Higher Education Authority (*Universitetskanslersämbetet*) and the Swedish Council for Higher Education (*Universitets- och högskolerådet*). The HEIs are independent bodies with control over curriculum, entry requirements and awards. However, the Swedish Council for Higher Education does have a range of responsibilities that cover national access policies and the Swedish Higher Education Authority has a similar role to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) within England, concerned with issues relating to the quality of HE; in addition, this agency has the role of issuing degree awarding powers, which are formally issued by the Privy Council within England.

Although Swedish students benefit from there being no tuition fees (OECD, 2013), finance still remains a barrier for some students, with 85% of Swedish students graduating with debt, mainly due to the high cost of living as a student. The social equality goals of HE in Sweden were reinforced by the introduction of the Equal Treatment of Students at Universities Act (2001), which came into force in 2007. The act enforces equal rights for students and applicants in the HE sector, identifying particular groups at risk of being discriminated, such as those with disabilities. HEIs are required to produce an annual plan evaluating their current activity to reduce inequality and the

strategy for the coming year. This plan has similar policy aims to the Access Agreement in England, which was introduced by the Office of Fair Access (OFFA) established as a part of the Higher Education Act (2004), however this was in response to the introduction of higher fees.

WP policies in Sweden have had some success, with a third of students being mature (26-40), however there remain challenges for working class men to access HE. Concerns have also been raised that the recent reforms will lead to fewer students entering HE from low income backgrounds and an increase in young learners at the expense of more mature learners. Sweden's response to WP does share many traits with England; with targeted initiatives, an increase in HEIs, the expansion of places and government legislation to drive behaviour. The recent increases in HEI autonomy over certain decisions, in response to a changing market, are similar to the English reforms. In some ways Sweden is ahead of England in policy reforms to increase participation, for example they have already devolved admissions number controls to HEIs, a policy England did not fully adopt until 2015/16.

Case Study 2: United States of America

Equality in HE became a priority for the USA in the post-war 1940s, with WP policies emerging as a desire to enable this objective. The major reform to impact on WP was the introduction of the Higher Education Act (1965), under the Democrat President Lyndon Johnson as a part of his 'Great Society' initiative to eradicate poverty and racial injustice. The Act introduced measures to make HE accessible to underrepresented groups, the most significant was to address the high cost of tuition by introducing student financial aid programmes. Ideologically it moved away from the existing market driven model of the cost of loans being based on risk, to one that took social background into consideration in setting rates.

The financial barriers dominate the WP policy focus over the years since the Act, with Government interventions almost entirely looking to address this barrier. The Spellings Commission (Commission on the Future of Higher

Education) report in 2006 identified a number of key issues needing addressing with the US system. This covered the barriers caused by the complexity of the financial aid system, the poor access and attainment in HE for ethnic minority groups and the lack of access routes into HE for underrepresented groups. It recommended a number of initiatives, which would later be adopted under the Higher Education Opportunity Act in 2008. The act included ways to improve access to HE through outreach initiatives such as the federal TRIO Programs, which was designed to raise aspirations and access to selective institutions. TRIO Programs identify those from WP backgrounds and provide outreach, student services and training for staff. Many of these activities are similar the English national 'Aimhigher' programme that were being delivered at that time. The target groups for these programmes are those from low-income backgrounds, those with no parental background in HE and disabled students.

The system within the USA is one of the largest, most complex and stratified, with over 4,500 public and private HEIs and community colleges. The different types of institutions have different sources of funding and awarding ability. There is a highly selective end of the sector that performs poorly at attracting student from WP backgrounds compared to those institutions with low entry requirements that attract a greater level of diversity in their intake. The under represented groups within the USA are particularly focused on ethnicity, with the lowest participation ethnic groups being Native Americans, Black and Hispanic (Bowes et al., 2013). The WP students who do access HE are particularly concentrated within the two year community college system rather than the large State or Ivy League institutions. There are also stark differences in the retention rates between the four-year institutions at 77% and the two-year institutions at only 54%.

Under the Federal system in the USA, the HEIs are mostly autonomous from Federal Government. It is worth noting that individual states do have influence over the large public institutions as part of a large state system of HE.

Case Study 3: Australia

Australian HE policy has long had social mobility and inclusion as part of the stated goals. Importantly as early as the 1950s the expansion of HE was seen as a way to address a number of social, economic and political necessities (McMahon-Coleman et al., 2012). The Martin report in 1964, a year after the Robbins report in England, proclaimed that “Higher Education should be available to all citizens according to their inclination and capacity” (Australia and Commission, 1964), an almost identical statement to Robbins who stated HE “should be available to all who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so” (Robbins, 1963).

Major reforms occurred under the ‘Labor’ government in the late 1980s where the binary divide was ended in favour of a National Unified System (Luke, 1997). These reforms also included a move towards market accountability compared to a regulator-based system. This was continuing on from the previous neo-liberal approach to HE and included the acceptance that a fully funded state system would not be sustainable and expansion would be driven by the market. These policy reforms were influenced by the public sector reforms taking place in England at the time and shared the same ideological approach. Future governments continued on the path towards reduced state contribution and a reduction in regulation. These policy changes may have increased participation for ‘economic good’ but did not address the greater challenge of WP for ‘social good’. The term ‘Human Capital’ has been used by Australian governments of all persuasions to describe this utilitarian approach to education for scientific and economic gains above all other perceived benefits of HE. This is described by Luke as a move away from the English model of HE to a system more similar to that of the US (Luke, 1997).

The HE system within Australia is highly diverse, dominated by public universities with a small number of private institutions. The groupings have evolved out of the policy reforms in HE over the years, in many ways very similar to the English grouping. The Group of Eight is analogous to the Russell Group, as research-intensive elite institutions. The Australian Technology Network has a similar profile to the English Post-92 Universities in

groups such as the Alliance and some within Million+, both acquiring university status in the 90s and gained growth following a period of specialising in technical education. The groups also have similar student profiles with the elites having less WP students, in most cases the higher the ranking the lower the participation of students from WP backgrounds. Funding comes mainly directly from students, with fees introduced 25 years ago, with only about third coming from government sources. Students from low-income background and other target groups do get additional financial support to help access HE.

The key under-represented groups within Australia are those from indigenous backgrounds, rural communities and more generally those from low socio-economic backgrounds. These and other represented groups have not all benefited from an increase in overall participation. The political ideology behind the policy direction within Australia may have changed with the move between neo-liberal governments and those with more of a socialist focus; however, the direction has remained the same, towards a market driven system with elements of state intervention to correct for perceived inequalities.

Case Study 4: Germany

In post-war West Germany, WP policies began to be discussed partly as a result of contents of the Robbins Report in England (Enders, 2002) showing Germany falling behind other Western nations. A policy of massification, increasing student numbers and HEIs, was pursued under political consensus, along with pressure from the Social Democrats and the Liberals for social equality and a right to a higher education to all. In this period much of the institutional autonomy was conceded to the States, known as Länders. The 1970s saw a number of what would now be described as WP policies; grants were made available for those who needed it most and the universities of applied science were established. The Social Democratic States also reformed local policy to establish institutions that would attract students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

The reunification of Germany in 1990 brought about significant changes in the HE sector, with there being a preoccupation with the structures of HE and their effectiveness. Funding of HE also became a concern as participation continued to rise at the same time finances were becoming constrained. At this time the neoliberal concepts such as 'New Public Management' (Hartwig, 2006) began to take hold within Germany giving greater autonomy to institutions and an increased market competition between HEIs. More recently 'Target Agreements', a mechanism for reporting and planning between the state and the HEI in return for more autonomy, have included WP category targets such as gender equality. In comparison with England, and despite the reforms, WP policy and initiatives have not been high in priority for institutions or the states in Germany (Wolter, 2000).

Germany has a large and diverse HE sector with strong regional identities and local accountability. The main types of institution are:

- **Universität** – These are mainly research-intensive institutions. Their portfolio includes a range of subjects with some specialising in technology. These are similar to the pre-92 universities found within England.
- **Fachhochschule** – Universities of applied science, training for industry and business is the main focus of these institutions. Often industry placements are a feature of the qualifications. Around 1/3 of students in Germany study in these HEIs
- **Kunst-, Musik- und Filmhochschule** – These are highly selective colleges of the art, music and film. They are similar to the specialist art and music colleges in England.
- **Berufsakademie** - Universities of cooperative education, these have similar role to FE colleges that offer HE in England. They offer degree level qualifications with an industry focus. Employability is high for students of these colleges as they have to be training with industry to be eligible to enrol.

- **Private Hochschulen** –These private colleges again link directly with the workplace and offer flexible modes of study.

The majority of the sector is publicly funded with a small private sector. The Federal government does legislate for Higher Education in areas such as fair access; however, due to the federal structure of Germany each state has its own HE policies, structures and priorities.

Tuition fees have been a controversial issue in Germany since the unification of East and West. Until recently the majority of states in the old West Germany charged a fee for tuition introduced under a neo-liberal policy to transfer the cost directly to the individual, however, by the middle of 2014 all tuition was free across the country. Fees were banned under the Federal legislation until a Federal Court ruling allowed modest fees to be charged as long as student financial support was also provided through loans. The abandonment of fees came about amidst public pressure, although the policy of fees had the support of the right-of-centre politicians in Government, this lack of popularity may have impacted on the elections of 2013.

Due to the differences between states the Federal Government has a role in ensuring the qualifications have currency across Germany. Institutions have only relatively recently experienced greater autonomy from the states, now having the ability to have greater say on their finances, administration and academic structures. Universities in the old West Germany have always enjoyed a strong culture of autonomy, as they believed state influence to be a risk to their academic freedom.

Analysis of the case studies

In researching the case studies it is clear that although there are a number of differences between the HE systems in each country, there are also a number of common features. One similarity is the increase in participation in the 1960's in the same way as the system within the UK. The Robbins Report at the time had an impact on both nations, instigating debate about the size and

future of HE in each nation. The countries also shared a number of challenges in safeguarding social justice and thus developed WP policies to target under-represented groups. The target groups were also on the whole shared; no parental history of HE, socioeconomic background, gender and ethnicity.

The massification is common across all of the case studies, including England. This increase in participation does not however correlate to a reduction in WP, with evidence from other comparative studies (Shavit, 2007) suggesting that all social groups benefit from the expansion. Stratification is also a common feature; the impact of this stratification on WP is a less studied area and in the examples used there are unique circumstances for the stratification, such as the need in Germany to have an institution to bridge the dual system of academic and vocational.

Autonomy of higher education institutions (HEIs)

The case studies also highlighted the differing level of autonomy enjoyed by the respective HE sectors. Research carried out by Anderson and Johnson (1998) investigated the levels of autonomy given to institutions by their governments in 20 countries. Three groups were identified:

- Anglo-American group - **low influence group** with little state intervention and often a number of private providers;
- The European – **medium influence group** with selective state intervention;
- Asian Group - **high influence group** that has regular involvement from the state in both strategy and operations.

Despite significant investment in interventions relating to social justice and WP, the research puts the UK into the low influence Anglo-American group (Anderson et al., 1998). This could also be explored further in the context of the social justice initiatives. The nature of the English HE system's autonomy could be contested, with more perceived operational constraints resulting from

government policy interventions than their legal status would suggest. This assertion is supported by the government exercising influence through “Quangos” bodies such as HEFCE, Aimhigher, Action on Access, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA).

Shavitl (2007) investigated whether expansion in HE provided more opportunities for disadvantaged groups or magnified the inequality systems. They looked at the HE sector in 15 different countries falling into three main groups and identified three types of system:

- **Diversified systems**, with a range of institutions with differing purposes including Israel, Japan, Korea, Sweden, Taiwan and the US;
- **Binary systems**, with academic and vocational institutions, in the UK, France, Germany, Netherlands, Russia and Switzerland;
- **Unitary systems**, with similar structures and purpose, of Australia, the Czech Republic and Italy.

In the relatively short time since this research we have already experienced greater diversification of the sectors, with more complexity within the system than suggested by the simple labelling of Binary or Unitary. This gives the potential for there to be additional typologies to describe the systems of HE, which is explored in the next chapter of this research. As already stated earlier in this chapter, the research also indicated that massification in HE benefits those from all social classes, but they also showed that neither greater diversification nor privatisation in higher education results in greater equality (Shavit, 2007) i.e. increasing access merely encourages greater numbers from within all social groups to aspire to university, maintaining the participation gap. It is therefore important to understand what link, if any, there is between the level of state influence and system of HE, and more specifically whether this link has any impact on the participation gap.

	Low Influence	Medium Influence	High Influence
Diversified	US	Sweden	Japan Korea Taiwan
Binary		Germany England Finland	Russia
Unitary		Australia Italy Czech Republic Scotland	

Table 1: State influence and level of stratification

Table 1 uses the two pieces of research to map the influence levels against the levels of stratification within the HE systems. The identification of the UK as a binary system within the research is interesting since in 1992 the then Conservative Government notionally ended the binary divide between polytechnic institutions (locally-governed, higher technical institutions, without independent degree-awarding powers) and universities. A gap between operational reality and official status may be evident here too, with perceptions of a two-tier sector continuing after 23 years (for example, analysis of the distribution of quality-related research funding suggests that patterns of funding distribution have not changed markedly over this period).

The research has shown that to facilitate markets in HE, greater fiscal and organisational autonomy has been given. Gruening identifies a number of characteristics within the concept of New Public Management (NPM) (Gruening, 2001) which are relevant to the modern HE sector presented within the case studies. These characteristics, which are evident in the case studies, include:

- a. Reductions in budget
- b. Increased accountability for performance
- c. Improved regulation
- d. Privatisation
- e. Decentralisation
- f. Increased autonomy
- g. User charges

In the context of WP policy agendas, the increased accountability is delivered through a number of reporting and benchmarking processes introduced by Governments. In England, when the Higher Education Act (2004) sought to increase a market in HE by introducing variable fees, a new regulatory body was introduced to increase accountability for performance in WP. The Office of Fair Access (OFFA) was given a remit to ensure fair access to HE and compel HEs to increase the number of students from under-represented groups. Institutions charging above £6,000 were initially perceived to be those at the higher end of the market, and therefore most at risk of failing to ensure WP. The state through OFFA attempted to mitigate this risk by introducing Access Agreement. These agreements were detailed documents where institutions were required to identify what proportion of their income, typically between 20-30%, they would allocate to WP and what targets they would set based on sector benchmarks. HEIs were also required to report on progress of these plans through an annual Widening Participation Strategic Assessment (WPSA). These changes were made at the same time as increased consumer information was made available to applicants through a national scheme called 'Key Information Sets', the aim of these was to allow students to understand where a course and HEI was positioned within the market.

Despite the attempts of the Government to drive the behaviour of HEI, early analysis of the Access Agreement policy (McCaig and Adnett, 2009) shows that institutions have used the agreements to meet their recruitment aspirations rather than to promote a national policy of WP. This in many ways

has highlighted the stratification within the sector, demonstrating a market-driven response to policy designed to control the market. The case studies also show similar NPM influenced initiatives in other nations, such as the new regulatory bodies and annual plan in Sweden and the target agreements in Germany.

It is evident that massification and the marketisation of the sectors within each country has led to greater stratification, with institutional grouping having differing levels of success in attracting WP students. This is particularly apparent in the 'elite'/highly selective institutions, who are less likely to have a significant portions of students from WP backgrounds, for example the Ivy League institutions (USA), Group of Eight (Australia), Universität¹⁴ (Germany) and the Russell Group (UK). These institutions are commonly less reliant on state funding, often having private endowments, and therefore have increased autonomy from the state.

The discourse on WP policy, its impact on quality and the lack of evidence of its effectiveness is active in many nations; influenced by either by political ideology and/or financial constraint. The neoliberal trend towards increased marketisation of HE does seem to be dominant, which raises questions about the future nature of the relationship between the state and universities. How much influence can the state realistically have on a highly stratified and autonomous sector and thus their potential ability to drive social policies such as WP?

¹⁴ Universitäts are distinctive from the other groups as they are an element of an HE sector, the others could be described as mission-groups that are formed by the institutions to be able to claim elite status.

Chapter 3: The future role of the state in influencing universities to promote social mobility

Introduction

The earlier chapters and associated literature have shown that the Higher Education (HE) sector is ever changing, whether it is to meet the demands of an evolving economy or of changing political ideologies. This study has already demonstrated that within England the role of HE has changed from a sector designed to educate the elite few within society, to one accessed by significant proportion of the population, yet even with this change the demand from government to widening participation in HE remains. The employability agenda has flourished with a move by some away from the liberal arts (Wilson, 2012), and the sector's structures have in theory altered with attempts to end the binary divide between polytechnic and universities. It has also been identified that many of these changes have been experienced in other countries who share a desire to widen participation to HE and to increase social mobility.

The preceding chapter highlighted the impact of a neoliberal ideology on the ability of the state to influence increasingly autonomous HEIs, and in particular the ability to compel institutions to adopt policies of widening participation. This development of state/HEI relationships raises questions about the future nature of the relationship between the state and universities. This chapter seeks to present a hypothesis on the future role of the state in influencing universities to promote social mobility.

Futures Studies

In 1513 Machiavelli stated 'Whoever wishes to foresee the future must consult the past; for human events ever resemble those of preceding times. This arises from the fact that they are produced by men who ever have been, and ever shall be, animated by the same passions, and thus they necessarily have the same results.' cited in (Szasz, 1974, p556)

The Six Pillars approach, developed by Inayatullah (2008), has been chosen as an effective conceptual framework as it a structural process that builds on a range of futures concepts into an approach which helps the reader gain an understanding of a considered future of HE and will help develop the futures research in this study. Inayatullah identifies six foundational concepts of futures thinking: the used future; the disowned future; alternative futures; alignment; models of social change; and uses of the future. These six concepts are based on a range of theories established by others, such as the work of Dawkins on Meme (Dawkins, 1989). This methodology uses the past to identify patterns and key influences that will inform the future. The six pillars are:

1. **Mapping** the past, present and future. Mapping seeks to identify the historical factors and patterns that have created the present. The present is mapped through environmental scans. The future is mapped through understanding the images or pulls of the future, the quantitative pushes of the present and the weights of history. Methods: Shared history, environmental scanning and the futures triangle.
2. **Anticipating** the future through identifying weak signals and emerging issues. First and second order implications of issues are explored. Method: emerging issues analysis and the futures wheel.
3. **Timing** the future through an understanding of the grand patterns of history. Method: macrohistory and an understanding of macro-patterns (the linear, the cyclical, the spiral, the pendulum and bifurcation).
4. **Deepening** the future through an analysis of the deeper myths and worldviews underneath the data of the official future. Questions asked include: does the underlying personal and collective narrative match the strategy? Method: causal layered analysis.
5. **Creating alternatives** futures through an analysis of the critical uncertainties driving the future as well as the archetypes of change. Method: scenario planning (double variable, multi-variable, organizational and integrated).

6. ***Transforming the future by articulating a preferred future and developing critical pathways and action learning steps to achieve the desired future. Method: visioning, backcasting and action learning.***

These pillars are not sequential and can be omitted and moved depending on the nature of the study (Inayatullah, 2008). As indicated within the methodology, this study the *Mapping* of the past and present has been covered within Chapter 1. *Anticipating the future* and *Timing the future* has also been covered as we have looked at the patterns of change in government policy and the implications it has had on WP, including emerging issues such as increasing autonomy and the movement of funding to HEIs away from the state to the students. The following sections cover *Deepening the future* by conducting a Causal Layered Analysis. The scenarios section form part of the *Creating Alternatives*. The last section is the Transforming pillar, offering a preferred future, this may be addressed in a future study.

Causal Layered Analysis

Futures research commonly works to initially identify patterns of change and emerging issues, it then goes on to critique the impact of these changes on society, such as inequalities within a system. From this information an alternative future can be imagined and a set of scenarios produced. These scenarios can then be used to identify a preferred future model or structure.

To help develop the scenarios on the potential role of the state in influencing universities to promote social mobility, a Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) (Inayatullah, 1998) has been used to critique the impact of the relationship between universities and the state to promote social mobility through widening participation.

The diagram below shows the four layers of a CLA. The problem to be examined is on the surface of the 'iceberg', showing the elements that are most visible and obvious. The second layer is the historical and social analysis showing the trends and changes in policy. The third is linked to the

values that have been established around a topic and the expectations for the future. The fourth deals with the prejudices that have been established around a subject.

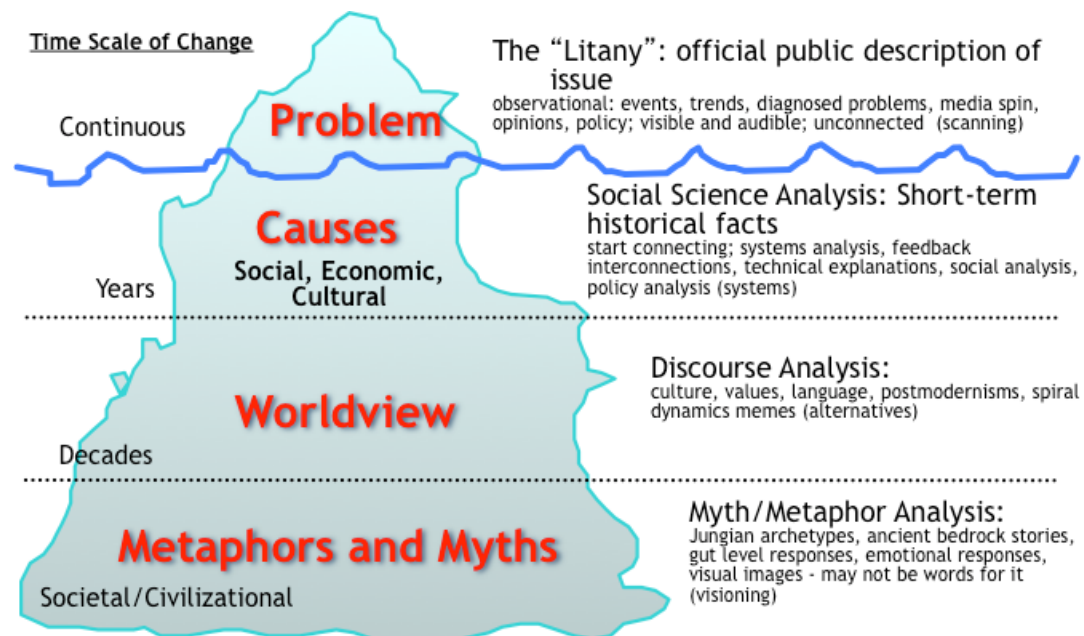


Figure 1: A graphic of the Casual Layered Analysis, showing the four layers and their role in the process. *Source Slaughter, 2003.*

Much of the analysis on the role of universities in widening participation is at the 'litany' layer, researching the issues that are most discussed and have the interest of the media. Using the CLA combined with the research conducted within this study enables us to understand the causes of the policy initiatives and determine if they are likely to remain in the future. The earlier study also supports the work in the lower layer, Metaphors and Myths, to challenge assumptions about why the policy initiatives have been developed and who is setting the agenda. In the last stage the myths are explored to understand why the issues appear at the litany level.

The diagram below shows a comparison of each of the elements of the CLA using the data produced in the course of this study to help address the research question. The current view, taken from the research on the current policy environment in Chapter 1 and 2, and the alternative drawn from the

patterns within the research into the historical development of HE and considered view of the future, such as the work by Bell on the future student experience (Bell et al., 2009) and the Russell Group response to the OFFA strategic plan 2015-20 (Piatt, 2014). The CLA below is a structured method to build a comparison between the current view of the role of HE to WP and an alternative future perspective.

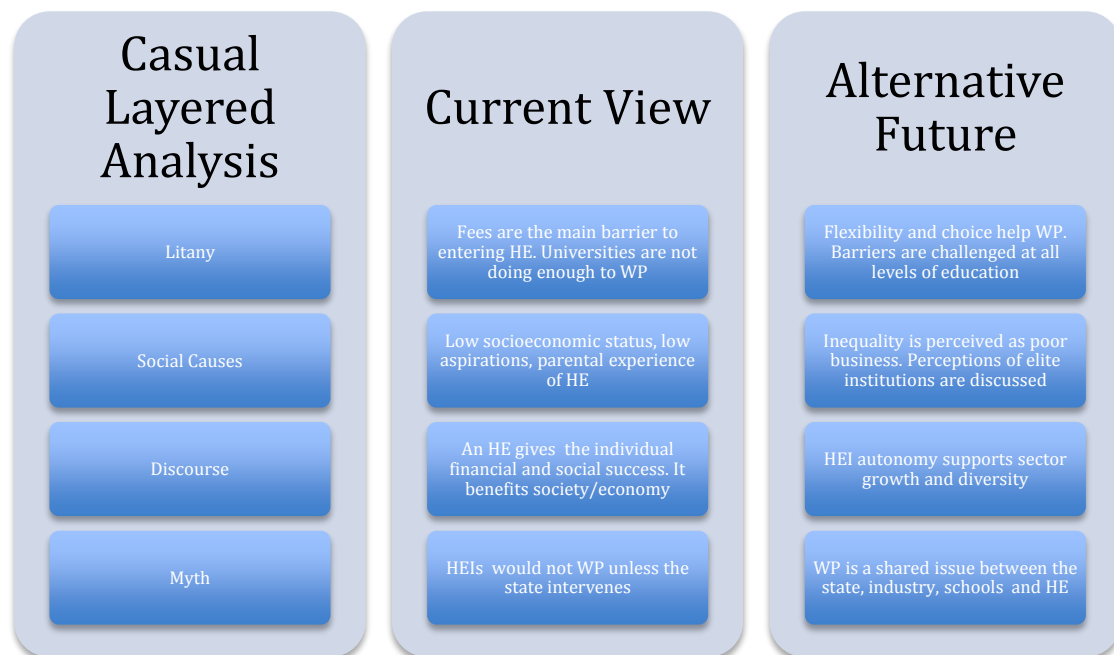


Figure 2: A Casual Layered Analysis comparison between the current view of the role of HE to WP and an alternative future perspective.

The CLA was used to create a set of alternative scenarios by working down the 'iceberg' from the litanies to the myths. This then allows an alternative to be created at each layer allowing an overall alternative view to surface. An example of this process can be seen in Figure 2.

Scenarios

The following scenarios look at an imagined future of the English HE sectors as a whole rather than focusing on institutions or groups of institutions. A number of assumptions have been made and some issues have been omitted as they are covered within the literature. Examples of assumptions, based on

the current policy environment, include the impact of changes in research funding, the expansion/retraction of international students and growth of UK students studying overseas. Research activity has an important role for many HEIs, however the funding and policy development is often very separate, both at government and institutional level, and therefore has not been considered a material factor in hindering social mobility to HE. Although it is noted that recently concerns have been raised about the progression of WP students from undergraduate to postgraduate study (Winskowski, 2013) it has not been a prominent feature with the discourse. The international students have featured in 'litany', with some press reports linking their numbers to a perceived lack of places with "foreign students heading to Britain, to take places away from home students and hijack knowledge out of the UK?" (Beall, 2012). The reality, as will be explained further below, is that the number of international students has never really had a great impact on WP or in fact the number of UK students taken onto a course. This is even less of an issue with the increased fees and the removing of the cap on numbers in 2015, with the financial value of a home student being little different to that of an international student in many institutions. The press have been known to cite the growth in the number of UK students wishing to study overseas at the period of confirmation (when the results for A-levels are available) as a result of students being unable to afford to study at home or the lack of access to certain highly competitive courses such as medicine, for example: "Straight-A students are being turned away from medicine degrees at British universities due to 'bonkers' government quotas" (Levy and Osborne, 2013). This is not perceived to be a significant problem for WP students, first because the changes to the cap on numbers¹⁵ and secondly WP students are one of the groups least likely to choose to study abroad (Piatt, 2014), even with initiatives such as the Erasmus Widening Participation Grant, which provides financial support to participate in study abroad initiatives.

The changes in demographics, with fewer 'traditional' 18 year old students

¹⁵ The government cap on the number of first time undergraduate UK and EU students entering HE was relaxed in 2014, 5% above quota allowed, and has been removed completely for admissions in 2015.

being available, has been highlighted earlier in this study. However, this has not featured strongly in the scenarios as they assume that growth will be found from those who 'missed out' on the opportunity earlier in life, this is a reasonable assumption to make due to OECD projections on the demographic changes (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008).

Using the review of the literature and studies already carried out, including the identified typologies, the following paragraphs give a descriptive narrative representing each of the imagined scenarios. Each offers a vision 21 years from now, four full election cycles and 43 years from the ending of the binary divide. Each scenario is influenced by the life-history approach taken by Professor Mary Stuart within her research (Stuart, 2012).

Scenario 1: The New Public Management utopia

The government provides minimal amounts of funding to Higher Education, often for research projects relevant to the national interests. No state funding is provided to HEIs or students for the tuition fees and maintenance of students.

Private organisations and not-for-profit organisations provide comparison data through consumer friendly websites, allowing students to compare the market and determine the course offering the best opportunities and value for money. Demand is driven by the employment prospects and earning potential of studying for a particular course. The government operates a single league table, including measures for student expectations and satisfaction, institutions have to display their position on the front page of their website.

The regulatory reform proposed by Lord Browne is implemented 20 years after being published (Browne, 2010), a single Higher Education Council is created, looking after students' interests and the public investment in higher education. The regulatory agencies such as the Higher Education Funding Council England, the Office of Fair Access, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator and the Quality Assurance Agency are subsumed into the new Higher Education Council.

The private sector involvement in HE both as a funder and a provider has increased. Government policy makers believing greater choice increases quality, encouraging the growth of private providers of HE. These new providers dominate the provision of a number of courses such as Business Studies and Law, they are able to offering these courses at lower prices than more 'traditional universities' due to the lower overhead costs compared to lab or clinical based subjects. Businesses increasingly recruit high performing pupils from low-income backgrounds directly into their companies and provide them with a higher education in partnership with a provider, similar to a number of recent developments including the BBC Academy (BBC, 2014).

The private sector is now the largest funder of HE in the UK, providing loans to students that are paid back over time once the student is in employment. The interest rates vary depending on the levels of risk, such as employability and entry qualifications, for example Pharmacy students paying relatively low rates and Fine Arts students paying high rates of interest. Students from higher income backgrounds often pay fees upfront for a small discount, normally 10%, and middle-income families access funds by releasing equity from their property to access lower interest funding. Students from poorer backgrounds are more price sensitive than other groups and have a tendency to target courses that have good employment prospects and remain close to home to reduce living costs.

Institutions have a high level of autonomy, with there being very little control from the state. There are no widening participation targets for universities, however data is published annually and the press focus is on the number of 'ordinary' students accessing a handful of elite institutions.

There are no subsidised services within HEIs, with many universities using these as an opportunity for incremental sales, in a similar way to many Canadian universities today. Much of the non-academic elements of an institution are outsourced including recruitment, admissions and accommodation. The cost of living on campus increases above inflation each year.

A number of the large post-92 institutions, who were doing much of the heavy lifting in terms of widening participation, have merged or folded as they were no longer financially viable. Some of the courses and facilities were taken over by private providers on a far smaller scale.

Scenario 2: A highly flexible, technology-rich sector

Much of the post-92 sector responds to reductions in funding and increasingly price sensitive students by investing heavily on technology. Students are already nimble and engaged with online content by the time they progress to HE, they are always connected, in and out of formal learning spaces. The use of augmented reality devices, similar to Google Glass, allows students to have classroom social learning experience anywhere in the world.

The private sector found it easiest to adapt to this new environment, agile enough to change its structures and model to fit the customers/students demands. One of the biggest selling points for a course is flexibility, many student have to 'earn whilst they learn' and the technology allows them to fit their education around their complex lives.

The campus experience is still favoured by students from wealthier backgrounds who can afford the fees and the living costs. The elite/highly selective institutions still offer the best employment prospects after graduation and the shared experiences of living at university still enable the development of a strong network of contacts, and thus good employment prospects.

The 50% participation rate has been exceeded with a high proportion of working adults taking part in some form of HE. Some secondary schools start their pupils on HE course early to stretch and challenge the brightest students.

The sector has become impossible to regulate by any single nation state, with international providers with strong brand identities dominating the sector. International treaties are signed to give a loose framework of regulation and some common levels of qualification. The state is unable to compel HEIs to

follow their policies of widening participation and instead uses the press to highlight inequalities in the system as an outsider rather than its traditional role as an insider with influence.

The cost of an undergraduate HE course is broken down into its component parts and many students pay on a per module basis. Due to the possibility of someone taking almost 10 years to gain an undergraduate qualification through the flexible online route, the government no longer provide support for tuition fees through this route. There is however greater support from companies to support staff to develop through this route by offering corporate tax breaks and tax relief for the staff members. Students are also given access to public and private loans to help with the cost of both the online and campus based education.

Many of the partnerships that helped to form collaborative Massive Open Online Course, better known as MOOCs, (Wulf et al., 2014) have developed into conglomerates of institutions sharing a variety of back office functions and marketing costs. The model of the MOOC has developed into a marketing and outreach tool (Parr, 2013) to encourage students to sign up for credit bearing courses leading to qualifications.

The widening participation to online and mixed mode courses is high with some of the lowest income students being able to access courses whilst working in fairly low paid jobs. A campus based HE has become the reserve for the wealthy or those who can access scholarships. Trends are starting to appear which show the low level of progression from the technology driven courses to research degrees.

Scenario 3: The government is for turning back: greater state funding and control

In response to public pressure and a dramatic fall in the OECD positioning, the government introduces a system of graduate taxation. Fees for undergraduate programmes are abolished and loans for living costs are made available to students from low-income backgrounds. Investment in HEI

reduces year on year as the government fixes the tuition fee per student at a relatively low level. The government controls the costs to the state by setting minimum entrance requirement for universities and reintroduces a cap on the overall number of places available.

Performance is monitored by government agencies and data is published each year on the number of students who enter HE from a particular background. Overall regulation is increased to address a number of issues concerning the quality of provision from HEIs accepting students with low entry grades. Concerns about the quality of provision within private providers is addressed by establishing a national HE awarding body for those institutions without a Charter, similar to the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) which was dissolved at the end of the binary divide (see chapter 1).

There is a trend towards centralisation to reduce the cost of HE to the state. This includes the sharing of services on a regional basis and the requirement to collaborate in recruiting students and widening participation.

Institutions have their autonomy eroded with restrictions being placed on entry requirements, fees, degree classifications and research funding. Institutions are held accountable for their funding on a regular basis with fines being put in place for not meeting widening participation targets. A system, similar to special measures in schools, is introduced to deal with failing institutions.

A number of Russell Group institutions lobbied extensively to leave the public system to become private not-for-profit organisations, a handful have met the requirements set by the Government to operate outwith the highly regulated system. These institutions have no restrictions on their fees or student numbers and are not required to report on the number of students they recruit from low-income backgrounds. They are able to access research funding from the government and many raise bonds to support the expansion of their provision.

Scenario 4: State funding at a price

Many parts of England experience high levels of unemployment and social issues, a link is made between this reduction in social mobility to low participation in HE from people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. There are stark differences between the standard of living within the north of England compared to areas of high economic growth within the south of England. Political pressure ensures the poorest of students can access grants and subsidised tuition fees. The funding for this policy initiative is gained by raising the fees for all other students and cutting all funding to HEIs.

Universities are set key performance indicators on the number of students they recruit from identified underrepresented groups. Institutions are compelled to spend a 25% of their income on ensuring access to their course from WP backgrounds. A system of post-qualification admissions is introduced to allow choices to be made after the exam results are known.

Private providers find the restrictions prohibitive and concentrate their growth on the lucrative markets overseas. The development of online courses is led by institutions within the USA, Middle East and Australia.

Many institutions are forced to merge into regional teaching universities. The majority of research degrees are offered by a small number of elite institutions. The overall number of students accessing HE falls as high achieving 'lower middle-class' pupils choose to enter the workplace rather than pay the high tuition fees.

Discussion of scenarios

The scenarios within this study are unique as they look at the impact on the student, institution and state. They acknowledge that the power does lie with the state, and autonomy can be given as well as taken away. It is also understood that individual institutions, due to their historic and strategic positioning, will respond differently to the range of factors presented, however, policy changes on the whole are most likely to impact groups/types of institutions such as the post-92s and the Russell Group.

The four scenarios outlined cover the extreme ends of a credible future using the literature and the professional knowledge of the writer. The alternative views of the future are focused on England, however they may also impact on other parts of the UK due to the economic and political links, and to a lesser extent other countries. The scenarios are useful to challenge current paradigms, such as that growth in HE numbers can only be achieved through direct funding from the student and that WP must come the expense of another element of HE. They also help the reader consider how a desired future may be achieved. They can be simplified into four useful typologies:

- Increased autonomy and social mobility to HE, broadly scenario 1
- Increased social mobility to HE and low levels of autonomy, broadly scenario 2
- Low levels of social mobility to HE and low levels of autonomy, broadly scenario 3
- Increased social mobility to HE and a low level autonomy, broadly scenario 4

The preferred future model: Creating an alternative

The scenario based on two variables (double variable) in Figure 3, below, shows the likely implications of four typologies identified in the earlier scenarios. The vertical axis shows the notional level of WP occurring and the horizontal shows the level of autonomy of the HEI from the state.

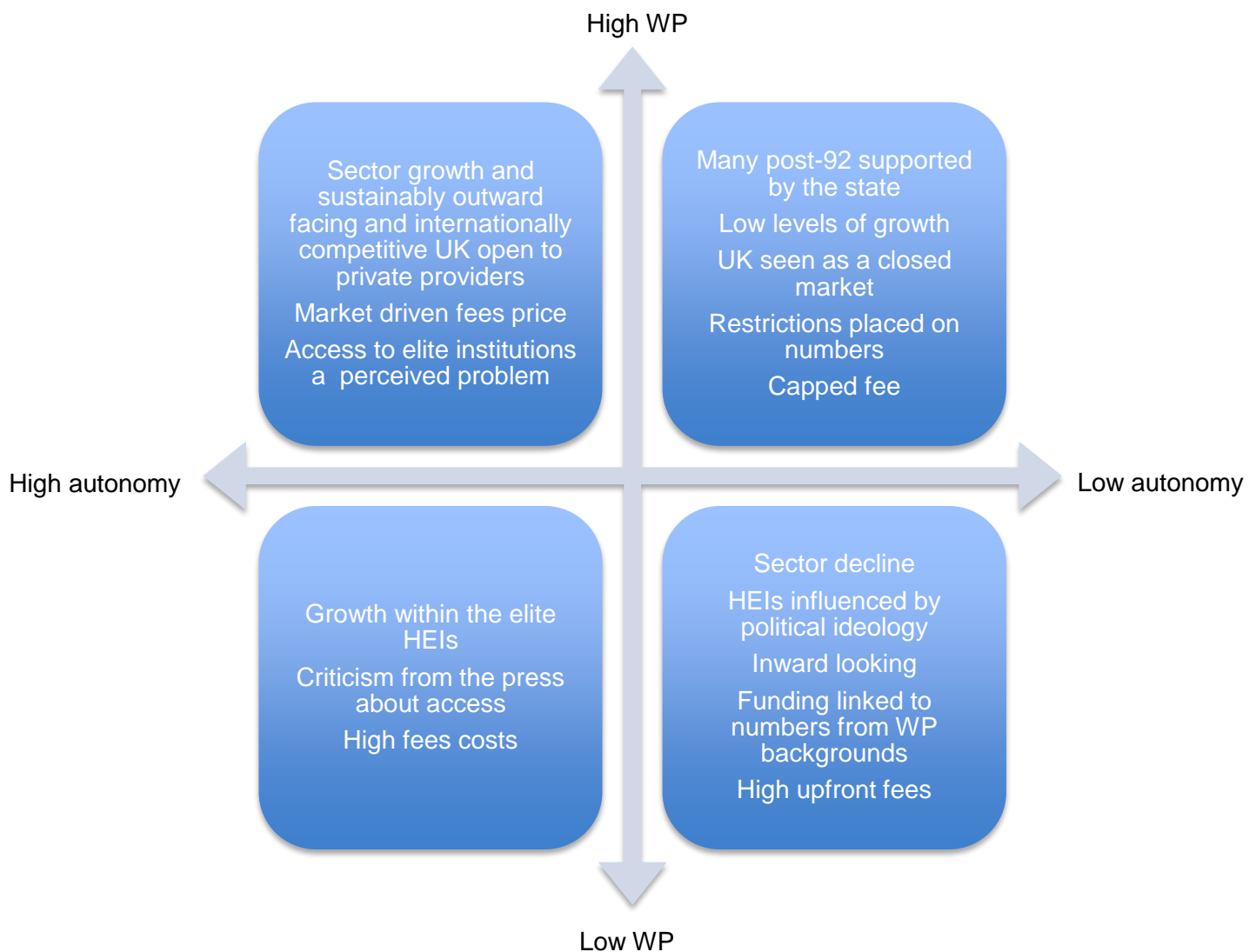


Figure 3: Variable scenario matrix

Through the process of analysis, the literature and data suggest that one preferred future for both institutions and government would be one of high levels of institutional autonomy and high levels of social mobility to HE through WP. The challenge is then to refine this and reduce as far as possible the negative implications of the scenario. This is done using the Schwartz

(1991) method, which investigates taking the scenario in four extremes, the best case or ideal outcome, the worst case, the outlier or wild card and finally business as usual by applying the scenario to current conditions without taking into account any potential future developments in policy or environment. This is done with the high level of WP and high-level autonomy scenario in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Schwartz method - High WP and High autonomy

Scenarios	Best case	Worst case	Outlier	Business as usual
Description	Students from WP background have high aspirations. Funding is not a barrier to accessing HE. Institutions are internationally competitive. There is a diverse sector that offers choice and flexibility. The state provides some funding for HE.	There is a binary divide with a number of institutions doing the social mobility 'heavy lifting'. Most HE is delivered by community colleges, many of these are run for profit. A degree is a requirement for entry to most jobs. Access to the top jobs depends not on your degree but the type of institution you attend. The state provides no funding to HE.	The majority of HE is delivered online. Only the highest performing and wealthiest students access the elite institutions. The government only provides limited funding to HE mostly to the research-intensive institutions. The vast majority of WP students access HE online at the same times as employment. The number of mature students accessing HE increases. The cost of an online course is significantly cheaper than a campus	There is a small growth in the number of WP students accessing HE. More graduate jobs require post-graduate qualifications. The lifting of the cap allows growth in the post-92 sector. Recruiting institutions compete on price, often offering discounts. Contact time is reduced. Private providers continue to concentrate on low risk – high reward courses. FE colleges grow their HE provision, offering low entry requirements and flexibility.

The four scenarios have been developed using the literature cited earlier in this study, for example the OFFA strategy 2015-20 to gain a view on the policy aims going forward and the OECD data on sector growth to gain a view on the likely areas of expansion. This meta-analysis of the evidence helps to build a considered view of the likely implications depending of the various environmental factors. The best case scenario is attractive however it is highly dependant on their being funding available from the state without their being demands on the HEI, which historically is unlikely unless the benefits to the state can be clearly demonstrated.

The conclusion to the study outlines what future work could be done on this model to develop a more thorough view of the future role of HEIs to deliver government polices, such as WP, effectively with the desired outcomes for all of the stakeholders.

3. Conclusions and future work

A series of questions were raised earlier in the study to help the current and potentially future understanding of policy and practice within this area of study.

The questions were:

1. To what extent is it the role of universities to engage in the delivery of social policies?
2. What impact has the political environment had on WP and HEIs?
3. Is there evidence that WP policies of the government have delivered the desired results or progressed towards them?
4. What is the future relationship between State and HEI in delivering WP, Could/would WP exist in a private HE sector?

The first question asked to what extent it is the role of universities to engage in the delivery of social policies. The historical evidence demonstrates that to some extent HEIs have always had a role in delivering the policies of a higher authority, whether it is the church or governments. These policies have seen the expansion and democratisation of HE to support economic and political demand. Whilst it is accepted that it is not the sole or primary role of HEIs to be a driver for social change, such as increasing social mobility. It is clear that whilst there is significant state funding and regulatory controls HEI will have a role to play in supporting the social and economic policy goals of any government.

The second question enquires what impact the political environment has had on WP and HEIs. There is no doubt that the evidence presented within this study demonstrates that the sector has expanded rapidly. The political agendas that brought about massification, and the WP agenda which has followed it, have had a significant role in the rapid expansion in HE. However this development has seen a rise in participation from all groups, with only a

small percentage increase in the WP target areas. The economies of scale enjoyed by many post-92 universities have also allowed them to follow globalisation agendas. It is clear for some WP does have a role in the development of HEIs, particularly for those most dependent on the Student Opportunity funding from HEFCE. The HEI profiles help us to understand this further, with the University of Hertfordshire, the Open University and London Metropolitan benefiting from the increase in WP in the past. This dependence on this agenda may have a negative impact on growth for these institutions as a more consumer-led model is implemented.

The third question addresses whether the WP policies of the government have delivered the desired results or progressed towards them. The WP agenda has had little or no negative impact on the development or quality in some institutions, such as the University of Oxford that, as discussed earlier, has very few students from WP backgrounds anyway. There is evidence of concerns regarding the impact on areas such as learning and teaching, retention and employability. However there is very little evidence to demonstrate this is solely down to WP rather than economic considerations such as larger class sizes and less personal contact with tutors. There is some evidence, for example the Milburn Report (Gregg et al., 2013), that established WP students do have trouble accessing some professions regardless of the degree outcome. Therefore have the WP policies of the government delivered the desired results or progressed towards them?, The evidence shows that desired results have not been fully achieved. There has been progress however it has been slow, missing the 50% participation target and fairly low impact as demonstrated in the public accounts findings (Public Accounts Committee, 2009).

The final question asks what the future relationship between State and HEI in delivering WP could be and can WP exist within a private sector? The study has shown that any expansion may have to come from the non-traditional groups, such as WP, due primarily to the changes in the national demographics. The private sector has a better ability to compete on price in targeted subject areas and is/will be attractive to some from WP backgrounds.

It is unlikely that there will be any state funding, other than access to student loans, available to these institutions. The drive for these institutions to return a profit, rather than delivering public good, will not be influenced by the social policy agendas of the state. The future studies work helps to address the first part of the question and is explored further later in this section.

It is significant to note that legislation for HE has not changed substantially since the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. The Green Paper in 2011, discussed earlier in this study, would have significantly changed the infrastructure of the sector. The proposals would have created a sector largely independent of public funding and focused on student choice, teaching and satisfaction. Since writing this study, the government introduced a new Higher Education Green Paper, *Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*. This revisits some of the legislation promised in the 2011 Green Paper, however it is more ambitious and has an emphasis on social mobility. It introduces a new concept called the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The TEF is designed to increase accountability for performance in a number of areas related to teaching and link this performance to the ability of an HEI to charge higher fees. There are also proposals for a new regulatory framework through a new regulator called the Office for Students (OfS) and mechanisms have been proposed to increase competition from new providers. These changes could be seen partly as a NPM approach and may result in some of the NPM outcomes outlined in the earlier scenario. Even the social mobility proposals within the Green Paper are target driven, a component of NPM. These latest proposals demonstrate that the state continues to struggle with its role in WP to HE. It is unlikely the final legislation will contain all of the proposals, with the current political environment being dominated by other issues such as European Union membership. These Green Paper proposals further highlight the relevance of this study and the need to rethink the relationship between the state and HE.

The study has explored the effectiveness of universities acting as agents of the state and potentially drivers for social change. Demonstrating the significant challenges faced by governments in successfully delivering the

intended outcomes. The case studies help us to understand the diversity of the sector and why the one size fits all policy agenda has not fully realised any of the key policy goals in participation and access. This has been hindered further by the changing agendas of different governments and competition from overseas, driving many western countries towards knowledge economies.

The international examples within the study show that these policy drivers are a concern for many and that there is little evidence of an effective framework that can be shared. Governments in the different countries have sought to bring change either through structural and regulatory developments or through changes in the funding model. This is evident from the changes in the binary divide and the move by some towards a marketised HE sector. These changes have delivered growth in most examples, but have had little impact on the WP agenda.

The futures studies within the study offer an insight into new way of considering the role of institutions in delivering social policies. The models and alternate futures aid some understanding of what a mutually beneficial policy outcome would be for both institutions and the state. With one potential model of effective state-HE relationships allowing institutions to have a greater level of autonomy from the state whilst sharing the strategic aims of the state in delivering growth through WP.

The futures research could be expanded further within the sixth pillar '*Transforming*' by conducting a stakeholder analysis. This could be achieved by testing each of the scenarios with key influencers within the HE sector, tasking them to give their view on how each scenario or element of a scenario might be achieved and how, if so desired, they could be avoided. They would then be asked to vision the impact of each on the sector and their own institutions. This could be repeated to refine the scenarios and ensure they are as plausible as possible.

This step can then be repeated with the preferred future, first by getting stakeholders to challenge the vision to help refine the model. This is described by Inayatullah as 'the analytic scenario' (Inayatullah, 2008); one of the three visioning methods. The other two methods could also be used, 'the questioning' to test the model and the 'creative visualization'. These would then be triangulated to create a more thorough view of the future.

The process may be repurposed further to analyse other direct or indirect state policies focussed on the HE sector, for example the visa requirements for international students or the Research Excellence Framework (REF). It is recognised that no methodology can ever accurately predict the future, however it would be remiss not to use all tools available to prevent repeating the mistakes of the past.

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